

# How to Bag Groceries

There are several factors to consider when bagging groceries. The very first thing you need to remember is that you are providing a service in the contemplation of receiving a tip. The customers are more likely to tip if you are friendly, efficient, and pay attention to what you are doing. If you are frowning, asking when it is time to go home, grumbling about having to be there, or tossing a bag of potatoes on top of the bread, you are not going to get a big tip – if you get one at all.

Next, look at your customer and make an educated guess as to how much you can put in each bag. If you see an older person that looks like they may have trouble carrying heavily loaded bags, then you know to keep the bags light. The same holds true if you see someone with their arm in a sling or using a pair of crutches and a cast on their leg. If you see someone that looks like they are in great shape, they will probably appreciate having fewer bags that weigh more rather than making twenty trips to the car to bring in all of the groceries. When in doubt, politely ask the customer if they mind you “loading up” the bags. Again, that personal contact will likely generate a larger tip.

The next thing to consider is what to put in the same bag. You already got the mental picture of the heavy potatoes on top of the bread, but have you considered what is safe to be in the same bag? When you start bagging the groceries, take a look at what is on the belt about to be scanned, and then look in the grocery cart to see what is in there. This will give you a mental picture of what to put in the same bags, factoring in weight, similar sizes, types of items, what is safe to bag together, what may be fragile, etc.

Avoid bagging cleaning supplies and food items in the same bag. Avoid placing fragile or easily crushed items in the same bag with items that can damage them. Think about food safety concerns and never bag meats with other items. Each type of meat should be in a bag with only the same types of meat. For instance, you can safely bag hamburger meat and rib eye steaks together, but you should not put pork chops in the same bag with hamburger meat. You may bag uncooked beef with other uncooked beef items. You may bag uncooked pork with other uncooked pork items. You may bag uncooked chicken with other uncooked chicken items. You may bag uncooked fish with other uncooked fish items, but not with uncooked shellfish items. You may bag uncooked shellfish with other uncooked shellfish items.

Fresh produce also requires a little common sense to make sure the customer gets home with tomatoes that are not bruised. It is OK to place different types of vegetables in the same bag as long as you do not mix heavy items with easily damaged items. In other words, do not put grapes on the bottom of a bag with apples stacked on top of them.

While looking at the customer’s groceries, know when you have items that require refrigeration coming down the belt. Try to place items that require refrigeration in the same bags. If you cannot do this because of reasons already discussed, then try to place the different bags next to each other in the grocery cart. That way the cold items will help keep the other cold items cold.

That brings us to how to load the customer’s grocery cart once you have bagged the groceries. Always push the eggs and bread items off to the side and place those in the cart last – or place them in the child seat on the cart. Try to put the heavier items such as bags with canned goods on the bottom of the cart. Then you may stack other stuff on top of them. Be mindful not to stack stuff on top of items that can be damaged by doing so. Avoid putting a gallon of milk on top of bags loaded with cookies or fresh produce. Cases of soft drinks or bottled water may be placed under the basket, but make sure to ask the customer before you do that. Some customers are unable to bend over to lift heavier items into their vehicle. Once again, this personal touch will lead to bigger tips.

That seems like a lot of stuff to remember, but most of it is common sense. If you are not sure if you should bag something together, bag it separately. When you get a chance, ask one of the adults later about whether it would have been OK to bag that item with something else.

Back to the very beginning of this we talked about smiling. Even if you are in the worst mood of the decade, smile at the customers and act like you are enjoying what you are doing. Just smiling will lighten your mood, but most importantly, it will generate bigger tips for you and the other Scouts bagging that weekend.