

## Know When To Say When

There is an adrenaline high to couponing, especially at first. I've felt like running for the door, arms full of shopping bags after I've paid, afraid someone will look at my receipt and exclaim, "Hey! You can't do that!"

But you can. And it's *fun*.

Sometimes, however, it's too much for me. Recently there was a website that was giving away hotel rooms for a dollar a night, but only during 15 minute blocks. There were stipulations, of course. The 15 minutes was not one block of time, but in five and seven and a half minute increments. And you never knew when those blocks of time would occur, day or night. And you had to fill out all of your information *before* the time ran out to the sound of a timer ticking. And you could only fill out the forms if you clicked on the page where the timer started ticking, and the timer kept moving pages...

Does it sound stressful? It was!

I tried it and couldn't take it. But now I know my limit.

There will also come a point when you will hardly be able to close your pantry door. Then you'll know you've reached **maintenance stage**. The stockpiles will be stable, you'll have plenty of food to work with for meal plans (which will keep you from eating at restaurants), and you'll have plenty to give away or to use for that last-minute get together. At that point, you can get into a routine of taking inventory each week and your "needs" list will be pretty short. Then it will be a matter of balancing your weekly grocery budget with needs and wants.

Usually if I can get something for free, I get it. It doesn't matter if I need it or want it. *Someone* will need it or want it, and sometimes items are nice enough to give as gifts, believe it or not. There are plenty of shelters that need health and beauty products as well as food. There are community and church food banks, and they are in severe need in our current economy.

## **Know When To Say When**

Make a once-a-month trip to drop off a bag or a box of cheap or free quality items you've collected that others may need or want.

Another issue with this process is that Life Happens. Your kids get sick. You get sick. There's a fieldtrip or urgent project or guests come in from out of town. Or, there's just nothing you need or want during a given week – it does happen. Occasionally. And then you won't really need to go shopping that week, which means more budget money for the next week!