

A Reading Guide for Parents

# JUST SHOPPING WITH MOM

by Mercer Mayer

 Ages: 3+



Teaching kids that  
*just because we  
want it, doesn't  
mean we need it.*

RADIX

# Story Snapshot



## Real-Life Tip

**Why this story works:** This book mirrors real-life moments every parent knows well. It opens the door to talk about money values in everyday settings - errands, grocery trips, or birthday shopping.



Little Critter and his siblings go on a shopping trip with Mom. As they pass by the aisles, his sister asks for just about everything - candy, toys, cake, even a kitten! But Mom sticks to her plan: they're only out to buy groceries and a new dress. In the end, everyone enjoys a small treat - a scoop of ice cream - as a reward.

# Conversation Starters

## Before Reading:

- What do you think people should buy at a store - things they *want*, or things they *need*
- Have you ever really wanted something while shopping?

## While Reading:

- Why do you think Mom says 'no' so much?
- Why do you think they get ice cream at the end?

## After Reading:

- What's the difference between a *want* and a *need*?
- How do we decide when to spend money?



# Key Themes



## Needs vs. Wants

Just because we want something doesn't mean we need it. This book is a great way to talk about what really matters when we make spending choices.



## Self-Control

Little sister asks for everything - but Mom stays firm. Learning to handle disappointment and delay gratification builds emotional and financial resilience.



## Smart Spending

Mom models how to stick to a plan: she buys the dress they came for, not the distractions along the way. That's a key early lesson in budgeting and purpose-driven purchases.



## Family Values

The ice cream at the end isn't a bribe - it's a shared moment. It shows kids that rewards can be intentional, not impulsive



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## Talk about it with your kids

- What are some of the things that the little sister wants in the store? Does she really need any of those?
- Did the little sister want the new dress? Why was it important for Mom to buy it for her?
- How do you think the little sister felt when Mom told her “No”?
- Have you ever wanted something when we’ve been out shopping? What helped you make a choice about whether to get it or not?
- What are some ways to decide which things you need and which things you just want?
- The family decided to buy ice cream. What is something we might decide to spend money on together?



## Activities to try at home

- Have your child identify something they really want and come up with ways they can earn money for it.
- Make a game of spotting wants vs. needs around the house, while watching TV, looking at ads, or reading a book.
- Family Challenge - Make a list together of three things each of you needs and three things each of you wants. Then, compare and talk about what you came up with.
- Daily Money Practice - Find a jar or container and start saving for something special. You could decorate and label it with the goal you’re working towards.

# Family Money Moments

## Mini Challenge: The “Needs First” Shopping Game

Next time you go shopping together, give your child a simple mission:

“Tell me one thing in the cart that we *need* and one thing that might be a *want*.”

Optional twist:

Let your child pick one “want” item to talk about - why they want it, what it costs, and whether it’s worth saving up for later.

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## Daily Practice Tip:

Start a family “wish list” at home. When your child wants something, write it down. Talk about it again in a few days - do they still want it? Are they willing to save for it?

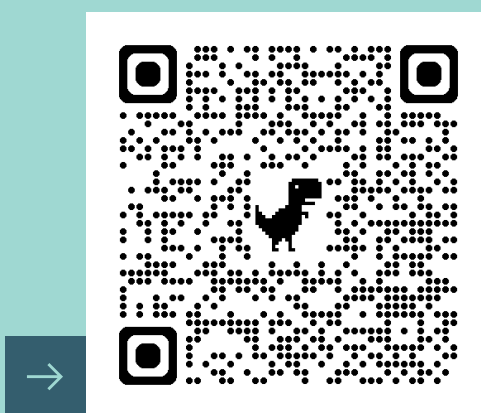


# Want more money moments?



## See the full book list

We've curated a full list of age-appropriate, story-driven books to help kids build a strong foundation in financial confidence.



Screenshot, save to photos, then press and hold QR code on photo