

# There's a War On! Rationing on the Home Front during World War II

*How would you have survived? Rationing in World War II affected every American, as access to certain foods was restricted in the name of the war effort. In this activity, you will take on the role of the head of a household in the 1940s as you make decisions on what foods to purchase, which to cut, and what you can do to support yourself and your family.*

## Background info:

Every American – both those in uniform and those at home – committed themselves to supporting World War II “for the duration.” Millions of American families on the home front quickly learned to do without, and took comfort from thinking that their sacrifices would help bring their loved one in uniform home sooner from the war.

Every morsel of food that they could grow themselves rather than buy from the grocery store was food that could be sent to the front lines; every donated metal can helped create a tank or battleship that would help with the war; every silk stocking that women did without helped make parachutes that kept Airborne soldiers safe as they jumped out of airplanes.

Food and supply rationing began in the United States in 1942 and the Office of Price Administration (OPA) “froze prices on practically all everyday goods, starting with sugar and coffee” (*Ames History Museum*). In support of the war effort, Americans now had limited access or none at all to items such as rubber, silk & nylon, gasoline, metal, milk, meats, canned vegetables, and processed foods. Families were issued **ration books** with a certain number of points to be used at a time based on the number of people in a family. Americans could use their ration points each week or they could save them if they wanted to plan for something special, like baking a birthday cake. Communities throughout the United States also hosted scrap metal and rubber drives to collect materials to be repurposed for war usage.

## Materials:

- Rationing/Budget Worksheet (one per person/group, below)
- Family Scenario sheet (below)
- Rationed items sheet (below)
- Pencils
- Calculator/Phone

## Instructions:

1. Divide into six or fewer groups (or individuals may work on their own) or “families,” and give each family a scenario, a worksheet, and a rationed items packet.
2. Ask each group to read over their scenario thoroughly.
3. Have each group work within the confines of their scenario to meal plan for their family for a week. Encourage students to be creative with how they supplement their available rations.
4. Use the worksheets to keep track of how many of each rationed item each group plans to purchase, and use calculators to determine how many ration points they have used.
5. Once each group’s plans are finalized, have them present to the rest of the group their scenario and their strategy for survival.

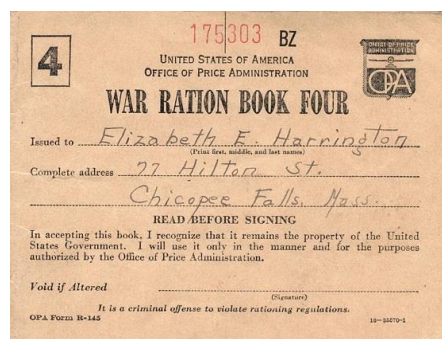


## Additional Project/Activity Ideas:

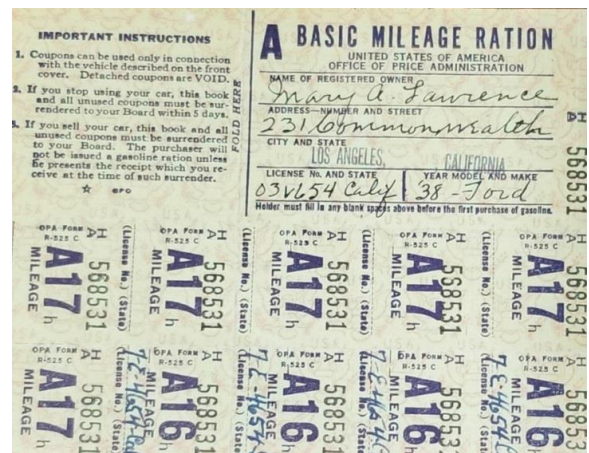
- After your child/student completes the activity, have them go to your local grocery store's website to "shop" for their week of groceries! How much did they spend? Did they purchase enough food for the size of their family for a full week? Did they buy things they could have grown or bartered for instead?
- Have your child/student attach points to snack items at home. How many points would they need for the amount of snacks they eat in a day? In a week?
- Let your child/student plan a victory garden of their own! Where would it go? What kinds of fruits and vegetables would they plant? How would it fit in your regular meal planning?

Want to learn more about rationing? See our "World War II Rationing Info Sheet" at [vawarmemorial.org/learn/resources/wwii](http://vawarmemorial.org/learn/resources/wwii)

Each person in a household would receive a ration book that would allow them to receive their share of goods. Even infants were given ration books!



Ration books were filled with stamps that allowed them a set amount of certain goods. The image on each stamp indicates which item they could be used for. Note that food was not the only thing being rationed – gasoline and other materials were rationed too!



### **Family Scenario 1**

The Miller family - Mr. and Mrs. Miller run the local wheat mill to support their eight children and two elderly grandparents. Luckily wheat and flour are abundant at home. They have 240 ration points to feed their family of twelve for a week.



### **Family Scenario 2**

The Rodriguez Family – Mrs. Rodriguez runs a successful apple orchard while her husband is off fighting the war in Germany. Apples and cider are abundant at home. Mrs. Rodriguez has 120 ration points to support her family of six.



### **Family Scenario 3**

The Shafer Family - Mr. and Mrs. Shafer are the proud parents of a new born baby boy. Mr. Shafer helps out at the local dairy farm while Mrs. Shafer stays home to take care of the new born. Milk is easily accessible for the Shafer's, but they only have 60 ration points to feed their family of three for the week.





### **Family Scenario 4**

The Salgado Family – Mrs. Salgado works at a food canning factory to support her family while her husband is off fighting the war in the Pacific. She has to support four elderly grandparents as well as her four children. Canned produced is accessible thanks to her job at the factory but she only has 180 ration points to feed her family of nine for a week.



### **Family Scenario 5**

The McMullen Family – Mr. and Mrs. McMullen both work at the General Motor factory to support the war effort, and their five children. They only have 140 ration points to feed their family of seven for a week.



### **Family Scenario 6**

The Butcher Family – Mrs. Butcher works at a meat packing plant to support her three children. Meat products are easily accessible thanks to her job. She has to make 80 ration points last the week for her family of size of four.





## ***"There's a War On!" – Home Front Rationing Activity***

***What can you buy? What can you grow or produce yourself? What do you have that you could barter with a neighbor? What can you do without?***

### **MEAT & FISH**

Premium Ham	
Turkey	
SPAM	
Salmon	
Canned Tuna	
Bacon	

### **EGGS & DAIRY**

Fresh Milk	
Fresh Eggs	
Cheese	
Kraft Velveeta	

### **BREADS & GRAINS**

Pasta	
Loaf of Bread	
Shredded Wheat	
Corn Flakes	
Ritz Crackers	

### **FRUITS & VEGETABLES**

Fresh Carrots	
Potatoes	
Canned Corn	
Canned Peas	
Canned Green Beans	
Canned Peaches	
Canned Pears	
Canned Fruit Salad	
Fresh Apples	

### **BAKING NEEDS**

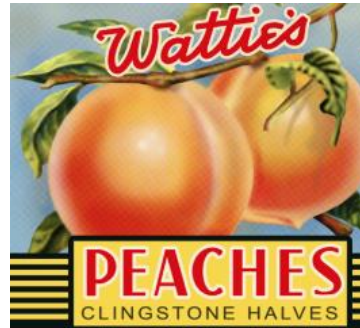
Flour	
Crisco Shortening	
Sugar	
Molasses	

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

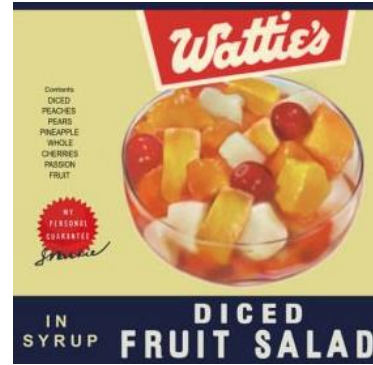
Tomato Sauce	
Canned Olives	
Orange Juice	
Coffee	



CANNED PEARS  
10 POINTS



CANNED PEACHES  
10 POINTS



CANNED FRUIT SALAD  
10 POINTS



FRESH APPLES  
4 POINTS/2



QT. FRESH MILK  
21 POINTS



DOZEN FRESH EGGS  
18 POINTS



CHEESE  
12 POINTS/LB



ORANGE JUICE  
7 POINTS



KRAFT VELVEETA  
CHEESE 4 POINTS



CANNED CORN  
10 POINTS



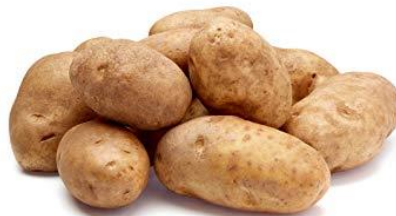
CANNED PEAS  
10 POINTS



CANNED GREEN BEANS  
8 POINTS



FRESH CARROTS  
8 POINTS/BUNCH



POTATOES  
3 POINTS/LB



SHREDDED WHEAT  
6 POINTS



CORN FLAKES CEREAL  
6 POINTS





LOAF OF BREAD  
12 POINTS



PASTA  
7 POINTS



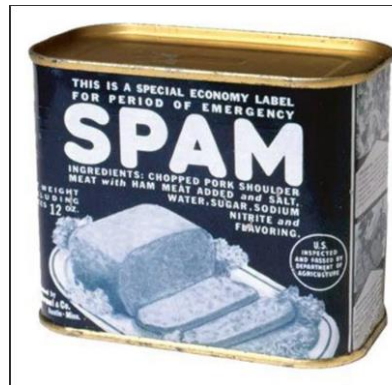
RITZ CRACKERS  
5 POINTS



CANNED OLIVES  
5 POINTS



TOMATO SAUCE  
4 POINTS



SPAM CANNED MEAT  
5 POINTS



TURKEY  
17 POINTS/LB

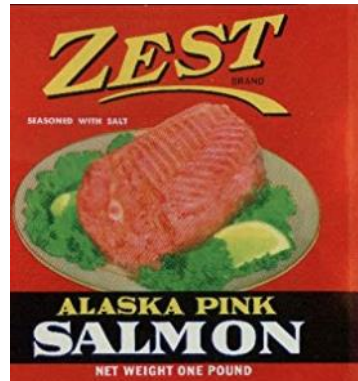


PREMIUM HAM  
15 POINTS/LB





BACON  
10 POINTS/LB



FILLET OF SALMON  
19 POINTS/POUND



CANNED TUNA  
3 POINTS



INSTANT COFFEE  
10 POINTS/LB



MOLASSES  
8 POINTS



DOMINO SUGAR  
14 POINTS/LB



PILLSBURY FLOUR  
4 POINTS



CRISCO SHORTENING  
5 POINTS