

# 3 Steps to Smart Shopping

## WATCH THE SCALE

- You should be able to see the weight display plainly. This is a requirement for scale users.
- Look for the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Weights and Measures approval sticker that shows the scale is licensed, tested, and approved.
- Make sure the scale starts at zero (or less, if there is packaging).

## BE AWARE

- Watch the prices as they appear on the register and make sure they match the shelf price.
- Make sure the cashier weighs each item separately.

## REVIEW YOUR RECEIPT AT THE STORE

- The store is the best place to check that you were charged correctly.
- The cost of items are still fresh in your mind.
- Store management is accessible for correcting any errors.



## WHO SHOULD I CONTACT?

If you're concerned you were overcharged for a bulk item, talk with the store management.

If the problem isn't resolved, contact the ODA Weights & Measures Program to file a complaint.



**OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE**

### Weights & Measures Program

635 Capitol St NE  
Salem, OR 97301-2532 USA  
503.986.4670 | <https://oda.direct/BeforeYouBuy>  
File complaint: <https://oda.direct/GeneralComplaint>

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# Are you getting what you pay for at the store?



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## Be a Smart Shopper

PAY FOR THE WEIGHT OF THE PRODUCT, NOT THE CONTAINER

### WHAT IS TARE?

**Tare is the weight of packaging material.** It's the weight of the plastic container used to package your deli items, the plastic tray holding your cut of meat or filet of fish, or the paper bag your bulk coffee beans are sold in.

When you purchase items by weight, the tare should be subtracted from the total weight. You should only pay for the weight of the product, not the container.

### CAN THE WEIGHT OF THE PACKAGE REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

**Yes.** For example, an empty coffee bag might cost you 36 cents. It may not seem like a lot, but it's 36 cents more than you should have paid and this error adds up quickly.

### DO STORES AND PACKERS HAVE TO PAY FOR THE CONTAINERS?

**Yes.** The cost of the container is part of the overhead costs they must consider when setting the price per pound of an item.

If a retailer does not subtract tare for an item, you are paying the *same price per pound for the packaging* as you're paying for the item—whether purchasing potato salad at \$1.99 per pound or scallops at \$19.99 per pound. The store does not pay that much for the packaging. If the tare weight is not subtracted when calculating the selling price, you are paying more than you should and each customer is paying a different amount for the same container.



### HOW CAN I TELL IF A STORE IS TAKING TARE?

Many scales are capable of storing tare weights in their memory. These scales may show tare weight on their indicator, or will automatically set the scale to an amount equal to the tare weight.

For scales without such capabilities, the retailer should set the container on the scale and “zero” the scale before adding any product to the container and weighing the product.

At the checkstand, the checker should weigh one packaged bulk item at a time. The computer can look up the tare for one coffee bag and subtract it from the total weight. However, if two bags are on the scale, weight for only one bag would be subtracted.

If you don't see any sign that tare is being taken, feel free to ask the retailer “are you taking tare?” If they have forgotten, give them a chance to remedy their error. If they have taken tare and you did not see it, it will give them a chance to explain to you how it was done.