

When cafeteria pricing meets mathematics

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Prices in the Microsoft cafeteria are often illogical. For example, a “special sandwich” costs \$4.25. A piece of whole fruit costs \$0.50. But a “special sandwich with a piece of whole fruit” costs \$4.95. If you’re not careful, the cashier will ring it up as a “special sandwich with a piece of whole fruit” instead of as a “special sandwich” and a “piece of whole fruit”. (I think they eventually fixed this after enough people complained.) As another example, name-brand bottled water is available in the cafeteria. You can get a 20-ounce bottle for \$0.99 or a one-liter bottle for \$1.99. One liter is a little under 34 ounces. You’re actually better off buying two 20-ounce bottles than one one-liter bottle. Get more water and save a penny.

(For those who have a *Wall Street Journal* subscription, you can read more about how corporate cafeterias maximize profits in the article *Nowadays, Companies Make Money Off You, Right Down to the Last Bite* from the 13 November 2002 issue.)

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