

Shopping for Great Deals? Consider These Tips

When it comes to getting a great deal, you need to consider the source. In today's tight economy, choosing the right store or retailer, can make a big difference in price.

Today's shoppers have a vast number of choices for most products. There are off-price stores, discount stores, department stores, specialty stores, outlet stores, online options and television shopping channels. There are also tricks for getting the best deals with each option.

Off-price retailers

Off-price retailers buy their goods – clothing, shoes, household items, etc. – at a discount, directly from a supplier. When a supplier has cancelled orders or manufacturer overruns, the off-price stores swoop in and buy the merchandise at a discount that they pass on to their shoppers. As a result, the deals at these stores can be good. As a whole, the off-price sector is growing at more than 10 percent a year, which is far faster than the 4 percent growth rate for general apparel stores.

Another tactic these stores employ is buying up discounted merchandise at the end of a season and holding onto it until the next year when buyers are again in the market for it. But shoppers can also use this technique. Even the off-price stores will have seasonal merchandise at the end of the season, and will discount it even further. The shopper can also swoop in, buying merchandise at sometimes 75 percent off the already discounted price, and hold onto it until the following season.

Outlet store

An outlet store, or a factory outlet, is the manufacturer's opportunity to sell its goods directly to the public. By eliminating the middle man – or the department store – the prices are discounted. It used to be that the outlet store was located right next door to the factory or the warehouse, but these days an outlet store is more likely to be part of an outlet mall that itself is a tourist attraction. Many well-known brands have outlet stores where they offer their merchandise at discounted prices. The shopper needs to look over the merchandise carefully as it may have a defect or it may be an older model. If not, you can probably expect a good discount, as compared to the price you might pay elsewhere.

TV shopping channels

In any given television market, there are probably several television shopping channels broadcasting in your area. These 24-hour operations offer everything from clothing, to food, to collectibles to cosmetics at discounted prices. The channels offer daily specials and sometimes allow you to spread your payments over two to three months. These operations also work with manufacturers to offer merchandise that may not be available in retail stores. They may also package products that offer a discount not available in stores. For example, a video game system may be offered with several games and controls – something not offered in stores.

Refurbished products

If you're in the market for an electronic item like a television, cell phone or laptop, you may want to consider refurbished products. Because there is a risk of a problem with the product, you probably should not give a refurbished product as a gift. But if you're buying the device for yourself, it is sometimes a way to get a discount of \$100 or more, depending on the product.

Refurbished products are those that are returned to the retailer. The buyer may have simply decided he didn't want it and returned it. The retailer needs to make sure it works before selling it again, so the product is sent back to the manufacturer to be checked. Other times, a product is returned to the retailer because it doesn't work correctly. The retailer will send it to the manufacturer to be fixed and then must sell it as a refurbished model.

Here are some tips for buying refurbished products:

- Only buy refurbished products from well-know retailers.
- Make sure there is still some kind of warranty on the product. Do not buy something marked "as is."
- Check out the reviews. Maybe it would just as cheap to buy a new product with fewer bells and whistles than a fancier refurbished model.
- Make sure it is an item the company still manufacturers.

Seasonal

Most shoppers are aware of the seasonal shopping deals offered on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, and the day after Christmas when retailers drop their prices so they can clear their shelves. But there are other tricks to getting a good price that are based on the calendar. For example, some states offer a tax holiday when it drops the sales tax on big purchases like computers. Check your state's Web page to see if it has something where you live.

You can also be sure that there will be sales timed to certain events. For instance, exercise equipment is likely to go on sale in January – the time when many people make a New Year's resolution to get fit. And come Memorial Day, you can bet that grills will go on sale as the summer approaches.

Even in a tight economy, people still need to shop. But armed with the right information, there is no need to pay full price.

Barbara Delp is a freelance writer who writes about products you can find when you [shop](#)

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