

Earn A Black Belt in Bargain Shopping

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## Earn A Black Belt in Bargain Shopping How To Get What You Want, at the Best Price Possible



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THE POWER OF FINANCIAL FREEDOM



**bar - gain** - [bahr-guhn] – noun An advantageous purchase, esp. one acquired at less than the usual cost.



Let's face it: We are not all millionaires. But, this doesn't mean that you can't live a better life using the money that you do have. Thanks to discount shopping, you can double or even triple your dollar's buying power. Shopping for bargains can be a fun and rewarding activity that benefits you, your family, and your friends. The trick is knowing where to look; and, learning how to exercise control and discrimination when you're on the hunt for a particular item. Discount shopping can get you all sorts of great deals on lots of stuff, but the items being discounted may not be something that you really need, or even want for that matter. So, if you want to shop for a specific product, a steady routine of bargain hunting will eventually bring you face to face with a great deal.

Foresight is also a bargain hunter's friend. If you see a great deal on something that you don't need right now, but are guaranteed to use in the future, you can save yourself a lot of cash by buying it now and not waiting. Items like light bulbs and shampoo are good examples. Seasonal items are also subject to deep discounts, because retailers need to make room for the next season's goods. Buying things, like Halloween decorations, a year in advance can save you more money than you ever imagined, as long as you are willing to store them for a while!

### Here are several keys to finding great deals:

Develop a route and a routine. Find stores in your area that sell items at a discount and create a route. Devote half of a day every week to hunting for great deals.

Be patient and persistent. Keep coming back to stores that have good deals. It may take months to find a particular item at the right price, but when you do, it will be well worth the wait.

Remember that not all stores are created equal. That store right next to the mall probably isn't going to have as many deals as the one on the edge of town. Also, keep in mind that another location of the same store may have a different clientele, and this can affect the merchandise and discounts that you will find there.

Always be on the lookout for clearance items whenever and wherever you're shopping. You never know where they might pop up.

Look to the future. If you see a great deal on something you know you'll eventually need, buying it now will save you lots of time and money down the road.

Check out these "Good Deal" resources:

[www.dailytool.com](http://www.dailytool.com)  
[www.overstock.com](http://www.overstock.com)  
[www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)  
[www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)  
[www.slavetotarget.blogspot.com](http://www.slavetotarget.blogspot.com)

### Plan for Bargains All Through the Year

As we near the holiday season, future shopping is the last thing we want to think about. Still, December and January are prime times to plan out your shopping for the year. Planning can make the difference between making good use of the sales coming up on one hand or overspending and passing up bargains on the other.

Every shopper out there knows that retailers have sales in January. The depth of the markdowns depends on what sells and what doesn't. But, how do you decide what to seek and where to go? A little planning at home before hitting the mall can do a lot of good. Here are some simple suggestions:

- Decide what you are looking to buy. This may sound like a no-brainer but you don't want to add another sweater to your drawer-full just because it's marked 80% off. So, before you go out shopping, take a look through your house and see what needs to be bought or replaced.
- Use your local newspaper. Armed with your list of "need items", go through the newspapers and pick out where to go. Don't be afraid to look at the more upscale stores. Often these stores will have some of the deepest discounts on high quality merchandise. Many of the higher priced stores depend on quick turnover or merchandise to keep customers coming in and deeply discount slower moving merchandise. If some of that merchandise fits your need, you can get a great bargain.

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Plan for gift-giving occasions. The holiday season sports numerous items prepackaged for giving. Why not buy some of the leftovers for future gift-giving occasions at a great price? Do you have a wedding coming up? Maybe something the couple wants is on sale. If you have family and friends celebrating birthdays in February or March (or even beyond), the sales may have something that's just right for them.

Check out online auctions for new merchandise. During late December and January thousands of people will be auctioning and selling new gift items they don't want. You can snag some great bargains on e-bay and other online auction sites.

Visit consignment stores, thrift shops, and even neighborhood garage sales. These can be a great source for deals on gently used merchandise.

Plan for the year. Of course, you're not going to buy everything for the entire year in January. Still, this is a good time to plan what you are going to be buying for the next year. A shopping calendar can help you plan. Certain items tend to go on sale more widely at predictable times of the year. Knowing of those seasonal sales can save you big. Evalu8 has published a bargain calendar that can be found online at: [www.evalua8.org](http://www.evalua8.org)

As with all areas of budgeting and money management, planning ahead can help make your shopping more productive and less time-consuming. Take a few moments out of your holiday madness to do a little planning and you will be celebrating your bargain successes all year.

## Know Your One-Stop Bargain Sources

**Both novice and seasoned bargain shoppers are aware that there are many well-known large retail chains that are one-stop sources for deals on a variety of quality goods. Among these: Marshall's, Big Lots, Costco, Ross Dress for Less, Loehmann's, TJ Maxx, and Trader Joes just to name a few. Saving money at these sources is easy, but there is secret insider info that will help you discern what you're looking at and how to get the biggest bang for your buck.**

For example, **Ross, Marshall's, and TJ Maxx** all claim to sell the same designer labels and good that are sold at department stores. This is true to a certain extent. They buy designer and brand name overruns and remainders. These can be of the same quality as the goods sold to their regular stores or they can be slight seconds or irregulars. But, they also buy special purchase product to fill out their inventory - sometimes up to 60% of the store. In apparel this is often a much lower price point product that would never have been sold at the majors. So it's not really a

bargain, just a cheaper product. It's up to you, the shopper, to know what you're looking at. Just because it appears to have a designer label on it, doesn't mean at a lower price it's a bargain.

At both Costco and Trader Joes, the way to stay on budget is to plan your shopping by making a list in advance and to take only cash along with you. This technique will help prevent you from buying things you don't need. To get the best discount shopping experience at these "warehouse" style stores, follow these tips:

- Shop regularly and often
- Use cash to limit your spending
- Use the available coupons for weekly best buys
- Split the large quantities with friends or family
- Avoid trying those tasty samples that lead to impulse purchases
- Stick to your list
- Don't shop the food aisles while hungry!

## Bargain Shopping Techniques

**Once you realize that bargains are truly everywhere, it's just a matter of learning how to recognize a good deal and grab it. Follow these 10 shopping techniques and you too, can proudly say that you've earned a black belt in Bargain Shopping.**

**Rule #1:** Know the marketplace products and retail prices. Know labels and manufacturers, quality of construction, and fashion details. Cruise the Internet and consumer-oriented magazines for information. The more you know the better deals you can uncover.

**Rule #2:** Shop with a mission and dress comfortably and lightly so you can walk easily, stand for periods of time, and not be overloaded by carrying heavy outerwear.

**Rule #3:** Shop hands-free. This means no purse you have to hold. Instead, wear a shoulder bag or fannie-pack.

**Rule #4:** Eat before you shop and tuck a water bottle in your bag. Tired, hungry, thirsty, cranky shoppers don't make good choices.

**Rule #5:** Know your family members' and friends' sizes. Know the measurements of your rooms. And, take a tape measure with you. Carrying color swatches is also a good idea.

**Rule #6:** If you see something that is a great deal, grab it and put it in your cart. You can always put it back later if you decide you don't want it. Thinking about it first has caused many a bargain find to disappear into someone else's cart.

**Rule #7:** Shop with cash. Some stores don't accept check cards.

**Rule #8:** Be ready to buy before the need arises and save up a decent cash reserve so you pounce on a deal out of season and ahead of need without re-budgeting. When you need to make a purchase, you tend to buy cheaper quality products just to get you through. That's a waste of money. Cheap is rarely a bargain.

**Rule #9:** When you have favorite shopping haunt, get to know the sales clerk or retailer by name. Be friendly and nice. Sign up for a mailing list. Stop in often. You'll get better service and get the scoop on upcoming deals before they are generally known. This is true from boutiques down to thrift stores.

**Rule #10:** Serious bargain shoppers shop alone. Recreational shoppers shop with others. Focus and concentration is essential to the hunt. However, occasionally, even when you're seriously shopping, you may have to take a parent, child or spouse with you so do your best to stay focused on the task at hand.

## THE BARGAIN HUNTERS GUIDE

- ✓ Buy things a year in advance and save big money.
- ✓ Be on the lookout for clearance items wherever and whenever you're shopping.
- ✓ Explore the end cap displays and around the outer perimeter of the store for the best deals.



For more information on this topic, call a Certified Credit Counselor at **1.800.556.1548** or visit our Learning Center at [www.anewhorizon.org](http://www.anewhorizon.org)

