



Federal Trade Commission Protecting America's Consumers

Tips For Consumers

Shopping Online This Holiday Season? FTC Offers Advice on Getting the Best Deal

Whether your gift list is ready or you're wondering how long you can wait to start your holiday shopping, the Federal Trade Commission has [online tips](#) to help you get the best deals. The bottom line: Some extra research can really pay off:

Set a Budget. Create a gift list and check it twice to help you stay on track and not overspend.

Decide What Matters. Especially if you're buying gadgets, know what your "must-have" features are vs. those that are just nice to have.

Use Search Engines. Type a company or product name into your search engine with terms like "review," "complaint" or "scam" to find out more about it.

Read Reviews Online. Reviews from other people, experts, and columnists can give you an idea of how a product performs. But don't put all of your trust in one review.

Consider Reputation. A brand's reputation for quality and good customer service can really pay off.

Check Comparison Shopping Sites. They connect to many retailers selling the same product, sometimes at significantly different prices. Keep shipping costs in mind.

Consider Coupons. Some companies offer discounts via e-mail, and some websites collect and list codes for free shipping and other discounts. Search for the store with terms like "discount," "coupon" or "free shipping."

Read Return Policies. Not all stores have the same rules. Some charge fees for return shipping or restocking things like electronics.

Decide How to Pay. When you shop online, credit cards can offer extra protections.

Look for a Secure Checkout. Does the website start with https (the "s" stands for secure) when you're checking out?

Learn more about researching products online at OnguardOnline.gov/SmartShopper.

For hassle-free online shopping, keep records like e-mails and online receipts in case there's a problem. Also, make sure you know who you're dealing with and protect your personal and financial information, since anyone can set up shop online under almost any name. Learn more about safe shopping online at <http://onguardonline.gov/articles/0020-shopping-online>.

The Federal Trade Commission works for consumers to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices and to provide information to help spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint in English or Spanish, visit the FTC's online [Complaint Assistant](#) or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357). The FTC enters complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to more than 2,000 civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad. The FTC's website provides free information on a variety of [consumer topics](#). Like the FTC on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).

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(Holiday Shopping)

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[Shopping Online Infographic](#)

Last Modified: Tuesday, November 1, 2011

From Article at GetOutOfDebt.org