

# Procrastinators, Follow These Last-Minute Back-to-School Shopping Tips



You may have limited time to complete your shopping excursion, but that doesn't mean that you can't take advantage of deals and save money.

For many families, school begins in the next few weeks. If summer went by a little too quickly and you still haven't had a chance to go back-to-school shopping, don't panic. Just because you're limited on time does not mean you can't take advantage of deals and save money on new supplies or clothes for your kids.

Follow these tips for a quick and painless school shopping experience, and stay under budget while you're at it.

**1. Make sure you create a list.** If you're in a rush, you might be tempted to skip being organized and just hit the stores right away. Instead, take a minute and get your list together. You may have requirements from the school and a few clothing items you know need replacing. Compile everything you need to keep you on target. It can be easy to overspend and purchase unnecessary items if you don't have a list to guide you.

**2. Check inventory from last year.** Before you shop, check out your supplies from the last school year. Durable items such as scissors, calculators and backpacks may not need to be

replaced. Take inventory and cross off things from your list as you go. You might find yourself saving money before you even start.

**3. Shop online.** With only a little time left until the first day of school, you might think that there isn't enough time to buy online and wait for your order to be delivered. In fact, shopping online could actually save you time and money.

To expedite the process, opt for in-store pickup. Delivery trucks arrive at stores more frequently, so it won't take long for your items to arrive. One bonus: Shipping is usually free when you choose store delivery. You can skip battling crowds and long lines because many large box stores offer quick curbside parking and an online pickup counter near the front of the store. Shopping online also offers quick and easy ways to save money on your order. Open your favorite coupon and cash-back website to search for the latest deals and coupon codes at the stores you like. Click through the website before shopping to earn cash back on your purchase. Cash-back websites are free to join. You can combine the rewards with coupons and deals and then collect your cash back in the form of a check, PayPal or a gift card.

If you have Amazon Prime, you can take advantage of free two-day shipping and plenty of options, such as backpacks, kid's clothing and laptop computers.

**4. Buy generic.** Right now, at the end of the back-to-school shopping season, prices are dropping substantially on generic school supplies, such as paper, pencils and notebooks. If you haven't bought what you need, you may not have as many choices – but you will get rock-bottom prices. If your kids want to jazz up the designs of their supplies, try getting colorful markers or stickers and encourage them to create their own look. This will end up being much cheaper than items covered with images of celebrities or movies and television shows.

**5. Trade it in.** You might not have enough time to do this now, but trading in gently worn clothing or technology that is past its prime can pay off anytime of the year. Trade in the things you no longer need for store credit or even cash. Office supply stores, such as Staples or Office Depot/OfficeMax, will accept ink cartridges, printers and computers and issue rewards for future purchases.

Bring clothing that no longer fits to a consignment shop in exchange for cash. You can also have a clothes exchange with friends or neighbors, which works especially well when there are many kids of different ages.

Arm yourself with these tips and enjoy a stress-free end to summer.

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