



Things to Think About!



By Brandan Atkin

Managing Family Shopping

By Linda Jorgensen

Can I say, "I hate shopping"? It never fails. We'll have a specific dollar amount assigned for a family shopping trip and I'll go over my allowed budget with that one big-ticket item we just can't live without. I am certain I am not the only one who has had this happen. Many families often wonder why they can't make ends meet. Buying impulse items, paying higher than necessary prices, failing to plan for purchases can all contribute to "blowing the budget" on any given shopping trip. I am by no means the only one to experience this phenomenon.

Like most special needs families we have the added burden of large numbers of high dollar medical bills. Talk about compounding a problem. We have had many unhappy Family Budget Summit Meetings, as they are called here at my house, due to failure of the family income to cover family spending habits and financial needs.

After agreeing that we could not continue to go over our budget it was time to settle down and come up with some specific strategies to keep our spending under control and still meet the needs of our family.

Most financial experts agree there are several good strategies to follow when shopping for general consumer goods.

To find more information on ways to save money, or to find information about financial management classes in your area please visit the following:

66 Ways to Save Money

http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/money/66ways/index.html

Smart About Money.org

<http://www.smartaboutmoney.org/nefe/pages/home.asp>

U.S. Financial Literacy and Education Commission

<http://www.mymoney.gov/>

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Cardinal Rules of Shopping

1. **Write down your family spending policy.**
Sit down with family members and develop a family-spending plan. Write it down and post it in a conspicuous place. We have a copy on our bulletin board and I have a smaller copy inside the front cover of my day planner. No forgetting if I have it with me and can double check.
2. **Make a shopping list.**
3. **Stick to your list.**
If it isn't on your list, don't purchase it.
4. **Do your research.** Read Consumer Reports, lost leader ads, comparative shop. Doing your homework BEFORE you leave the house increase the chances you'll purchase the right item at the right price.
5. **Never pay full price!**
Watch for sales and discounts. Purchase seasonal items at the end of the season or in the off-season.
6. **Pay cash. NO PLASTIC!**
The average American Household carries over \$10,000.00 in credit card debt. Think of the amount of interest you're paying! Cut up your cards, pay down your accounts and work towards paying for items with cash.
7. **Be patient.**
Emergency purchases are rare. Wait for payday to purchase items on your list. Save up for larger purchases and pay cash when you can.
8. **Shop sales and Clearance racks.**
Always check clearance shelves and racks first for clothing, gifts, electronics and other seasonal items.

9. **Negotiate your price.**

This works most often for large ticket items such as furniture, appliances, cars, etc. Always ask for the "best" price. Sometimes a sales person would be willing to drop the price a small amount if they believe they are going to make a sale.

10. **Be sure the item is worth the earning time it will take to pay for it.**

Will the item last? Will I be spending a lot of money repairing this item? How often will I need to replace it? Is it really worth the time it will take me to earn it?

As the saying goes, "Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance". Or in this case, chronic over spending.

