

Essential Conversations: Shopping

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Parts of speech are indicated in parentheses:

(n.) = noun

(v.) = verb

(adj.) = adjective

(phr.) = phrase

Essential Conversations: Shopping

READING

How To Save Money When You Go Shopping

One of the hardest things to do is to keep ourselves from splurging on things that we don't really need. However, when we are shopping for needs we may still run into problems. It can be tough to decide which product to buy. Here are some questions to ask yourself that will help you make the right choice.

1. "Is this what I need or is it something I want?" For those trying hard to make good budget decisions, focus on the need. It is alright to **splurge** once in a while, but if you are really struggling, practice **abstaining from** wants until you have things under control.
2. "Can I **step down** from this?" We may have high standards when it comes to brand names or appearance. That doesn't always amount to making the wisest decision. If you are used to buying \$100 shirts, couldn't you step down to buying \$50 shirts? Once comfortable choosing the lesser priced option, challenge yourself to take it a step lower. See how far you can go.
3. "Can I find this at a **discount store** or **second-hand store**?" Always shop at discount or second-hand stores first. Look to see if they have something that you want. Don't **get hung up** on the fact that you are going to one of those cheap stores. You will often find things that are the same or nearly the same quality as you would in other places.
4. "Am I being too picky?" Does the item you want have to be **blemish-free**? Does it have to be a name that you have heard of before? Does it have to be brand new? More than likely, it won't be blemish-free after you bought it. After you buy it, you will have heard of it before. All items are used after you use them. The items will still work fine and accomplish what you want them to.
5. "Am I shopping because I'm depressed?" One of the worst times to shop is when you are depressed. You will think that a short-term fix to your self-esteem will be to buy this one little thing. It rarely turns into just one thing and it is rarely something that you absolutely need. It is like eating ice cream when you are depressed. It's just too easy to **over-indulge**. Don't let that happen to you.
6. "Is there a **coupon** for this?" Much of the time, there will be a coupon or some kind of special discount available for those items you want. **Scour** the internet and local

papers to find deals. You will find them and when you do you will realize huge savings. It takes a little more work, but it's worth it.

7. "Is this on **clearance**?" Look for the clearance rack or shelf. Let that be the first place you check in the store. Any time you can buy something you need or want for 50% or more off the regular price, you need to take advantage of it. Look for end of season items. Normally these things are reduced significantly in an effort to save space.

If you want to save money shopping you have to get yourself to think before you act. If you can follow these guidelines and ask these hard questions of yourself, you will find those difficult choices becoming easier to make.

VOCABULARY

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|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. abstain (from) (v.) | 7. over-indulge (v.) |
| 2. get hung up (on) something (phr.) | 8. scour (v.) |
| 3. blemish (n./v.) | 9. second-hand store (n.) |
| 4. clearance (adj.) | 10. splurge (v.) |
| 5. coupon (n.) | 11. step (something) down (phr.) |
| 6. discount store (n.) | |

DISCUSSION

1. According to the article, one of the hardest things to do when it comes to shopping is to keep ourselves from spending money on things that we don't really need. Is this hard for you to do? On what items that you don't really need do you often spend money?

2. One of the tips is to ask yourself if you can *step down* from a certain product. What does it mean to *step something down*, especially when you are shopping? Have you ever stepped down from something you wanted to buy? Do you prefer brand names, or will you sometimes buy something similar that is cheaper?

3. Some people only do shopping when they need to buy something. Other people go shopping because it's fun. How about you? Do you ever go shopping for fun? Do you ever buy more things than you thought you would? Do you make a shopping list before you go to the shops? Do you ever just go window-shopping? What do you like to look at when you just go browsing? What do you tell salesclerks when they start hassling you?

4. Have you ever gone on a shopping spree? If you have, what did you buy? If you have not, do you think it would be fun? What would you buy if you ever go on a shopping spree?
5. How often do you do online shopping? What are the advantages of online shopping? What are the disadvantages? Do you spend more when you shop online than you would if you went to a shopping mall? If yes, why? What do you do when you buy something online and the product is not what you expected, or if there is something wrong with it?
6. Do you usually pay cash when you go shopping, or do you use credit cards? Which one do you think is better? Why? Some people say they spend too much money when they use their credit cards. Why do you think this happens? Does it ever happen to you?
7. Do you ever use discount coupons? Where do people get discount coupons from? Do you ever shop at discount stores? What kind of items do people buy at discount stores? Some people say the quality of items is always worse at discount stores. Do you agree? Are there good quality discount stores in your town or city?
8. If you buy something, and you find it is damaged or defective when you get home, what will you do? What do shops usually do when people return things? Is it easy to get your money back? How about if you don't like a gift someone gave you: can you return it to the shop and get some money back?
9. Are you picky when you shop for something? Does the product have to be perfect, or are you willing to buy something at a discount because it has a blemish? Will you ask for a discount if there is a small blemish on a piece of clothing, or some other product?
10. Are there any flea markets in your city? Do you ever buy second-hand things? Why do some people refuse to buy second-hand things? Do you ever buy antique furniture? Are there many antique shops in your city? Are there many second-hand shops, or thrift stores? What's the difference between second-hand and antique?
11. Do you ever buy fakes? What kind of fake products are the most popular? Have you ever bought something you thought were genuine, to find out later it's fake? What would you do if you find out a product is fake?
12. Do you ever buy gift certificates for other people? Have you ever received a gift certificate? If yes, for what kind of store? What did you buy? Do you think gift certificates are good gifts? Why, or why not?

13. Do you ever go shopping because you feel sad or unhappy? If yes, does shopping make you feel better? Why, or why not? Have you ever regretted buying something? Tell your partner about it.

14. Many people wait for clearance sales before they go shopping. Do you like clearance sales? If you do, what kind of items do you usually buy at clearance sales? What kind of clearance sales are usually the most popular?

WRITING

Write a short sentence with each of these words:

1. abstain (from) (v.) _____
2. blemish (n./v.) _____
3. coupon (n.) _____
4. discount store (n.) _____
5. over-indulge (v.) _____
6. second-hand store (n.) _____
7. splurge (v.) _____

IDIOM

“Costs an arm and a leg”

When would you say something *costs an arm and a leg*? Tell your partner or the class of something that cost you an arm and a leg.