



Click & Save

50 great shopping sites and phone apps, plus other cool online tricks that every shopper should know

Even if you're trying to cut back on spending, let's face it, you still have to shop—and maybe even treat yourself to the occasional splurge. If you have a juicy coupon or there's a big sale going on, it can be tough to resist. And there's no better place to troll for discounts than the Web. So we weren't too surprised when women who shopped online in the past 12 months told us in our new ShopSmart national survey that they're now spending 61 percent of their shopping time on the Internet. That's up from 50 percent in February 2007, the last time we asked.

Of course, shopping is always more fun when you know the best places to go. So we sent a team of researchers to find great shopping sites that you might not be using but should. Even if you don't buy anything, we promise that you'll have fun checking the sites out. We also found cool new features on old standby sites such as AOL and Zappos that are worth a look, and phone applications that can help you save time and money. So get clicking!

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LEO ESPINOSA



Cool new shopping sites

It's tough to keep up with the latest sites and features, so here at ShopSmart we do it for you. These sites are some of the coolest we've seen lately. Some are new, and some are just new to us.

Alice

Best for buying basics

Keep your home fully stocked with all the important household staples, like detergent and toilet paper, without having to haul them home from the supermarket. At Alice, which shares its name with the beloved housekeeper on "The Brady Bunch," you can buy directly from manufacturers for less. Discounts can be particularly steep if you use clickable coupons. The site makes it fun to update your shopping list and reminds you when it's time to reorder. Shipping is free when you buy at least six items.

CouponWinner.com

Best for loads of coupons

This newly redesigned site has coupons and promotional codes from about 7,000 retailers, including some exclusives, such as \$40 off a year of eHarmony. It's well organized, with categories including most-used coupons, exclusive deals, free shipping, about-to-expire offers, and more. Also check out its new sister site, PromotionalCodes.com.

Covet

Best for creating a look

Covet acts like a virtual personal shopper, helping you find your style based on your responses to a series of fashion photos. Choose the outfit that's closest to your style, and the virtual stylist will help you find clothes that are in that style, in your size, and on sale.

IMshopping

Best for locating obscure stuff

Ask a shopping question and get an answer from a real, live human. Recent

example: "Where can I find vintage eyeglass frames?" Works on Twitter, too, at @imshopping. Just be aware that it's not a live chat; the site forwards your question to an expert in that particular shopping category, who does some digging, then gets back to you, usually within a few hours.

Like.com

Best for finding exactly what you want

If you're hunting for something specific—whether it's a purple leather jacket or pink shearling boots—this site can help you track it down. Shop by color, style, material, or detail, such as pattern or shape. You can even use your mouse to draw a box around a detail you like—a square buckle on a belt, for instance—and the search engine will bring you more items with the detail.

Modista

Best for buying accessories

Zero in on the exact style of shoe, handbag, watch, or other accessory you're looking for within a database of hundreds of items and get to the e-tailer with one click. As with Like.com, you can use color or shape to home in on what you're looking for; you can also sort by price and percentage discount.

NetHaggler

Best for bargain shopping

Download a Web tool called a hagglet and you can save in one of three ways: "Tag" an item and wait for a price drop, "Nag" a merchant for a better price, or "Haggle" as a group for bargain deals. The tool pops up when you go to the Web sites of national retailers that participate, including Macy's and Delia's.

It takes some time to set up, but once you do, it's easy to use.

PicClick

Best for browsing eBay

Choose a category, and this site's search engine captures all of eBay's current offerings in an easy-to-scan visual thumbnail format. Sort by "ending soon," "newly listed," or "lowest price."

Polyvore

Best for outfit shopping

Start with a skirt, shirt, or shoes, then drag and drop matching clothing and accessories to make an outfit—just like playing with Colorforms when you were a kid. You can click on merchants' links if you choose to buy any of the items, or you can simply scope out hot trends and get outfit ideas.

PricesAndCoupons.com

Best for finding the best prices

PriceGrabber and other price-comparison sites help you find the deals on products you're looking for; this new addition to your shopping arsenal goes a step further and shows you prices after coupon-code discounts when they're available. It also includes shipping charges. Check a few price-comparison sites before you buy.

Savings.com

Best for trolling for bargains

At this newly revamped site, fans post coupon codes and vote on them, "bumping" good ones to the top of the list and "burying" the stinkers so that it's easy to find the best deals. A recent score: \$5 off Legos at www.lego.com. Check out the deal of the week for big savings.

Taaz

Best for makeup

Upload a photo of yourself and you can "try out" all kinds of cosmetic shades from top brands such as MAC and Bobbi Brown. **TIP** Take a new head shot of yourself just for use on Taaz. The makeup goes on best when the photo is a straight-on shot that clearly shows your facial features. Warning: This site is addictive.

UWantSavings

Best for closeouts

It's like a giant flea market online with new stuff that sells for up to 80 percent off. Recent examples we found: an Italian leather laptop tote in three color choices was originally \$200, marked down to \$60; a cookware set that had been \$200 was marked down to \$95.

OLD STANDBYS WITH FUN EXTRA FEATURES

AOL Shopping

(shopping.aol.com)

Check it out New monthly specials.

The best ones are seasonal, like the Leatherman tools we found on sale just in time for Father's Day. Shop weekly specials and daily deals, too.

Blue Nile

Check it out Design-it-yourself jewelry.

Create your own diamond earrings or even an engagement ring, right on your computer screen. Click on the "build your own" buttons.

Buzzillions

Check it out Local search.

Search for the best deal and find the item locally.

Gap, Old Navy, Banana Republic, Piperlime, Athleta

Check it out Flat-rate shipping.

Click back and forth among stores and create one order that's shipped to you for \$7 no matter how big the box.

Google Product Search

(www.google.com/products)

Check it out Wish lists.

Google, which helps you find products, reviews, and best prices, now offers a shopping list (froogle.google.com/Shoppinglist) to help you keep track of things you need to buy and also to share your wish list.

H&M (www.hm.com)

Check it out Virtual

shopping room. "Try on" outfits online on those days when you don't feel like doing it in person.

RetailMeNot.com

Check it out Printable coupons.

This coupon giant now offers more printable coupons, including local deals from Valpak and Restaurants.com.

Sears

Check it out Group gifts.

Use Give Together—everyone logs on and chips in for that new table saw for Dad's birthday.

Shop.com

Check it out Price alerts.

Find out when a coveted item goes on sale.





GREAT SITES FOR LIMITED-TIME SALES

Earthlink Hot Deals

(deals.earthlink.net)

Hot daily deals on name sites such as Expedia and eBay, plus coupons and price comparisons.

6pm.com

Daily deals for everyone in your family, owned by trusty Zappos.com. We were tempted by Keds for less than half price and Baby Phat shades for \$15, from \$59.

Groupon

Group coupons. Check the daily deal for your city. (A New York deal we found: \$150 in spa treatments for \$50.) If enough people sign up, everyone saves.

TheOutnet.com




Limited-time "flash" sales and giveaways on designer duds and accessories.

Woot

One big sale every day, usually on electronics, that lasts until the item is sold out. Also see the Wine Woot and Shirt Woot, plus iPhone app Wootwatch.

Shop-safe checklist

Before you hand over your credit-card info, make sure a Web site is on the up and up. Here's a simple checklist. Keep it next to your computer to give you that extra security when you hit the final checkout button.

-  **Step 1: MAKE SURE THE SITE PROVIDES FULL CONTACT INFO.** It should list a street address as well as a phone number or e-mail address. Look on the "Contact Us" or "About Us" pages. If it's not there, look at the return policy or privacy policy and see if it mentions a mailing address.
-  **Step 2: CHECK OUT THE PRIVACY POLICY.** Good sites should have one. Look for a link at the bottom of the home page that says "Privacy Policy" or for a link on the "About Us" or FAQ pages. Read the policy to find out whether the company shares customer info with third parties and whether you can opt out. Or simply look for a TRUSTe seal, which means the privacy policy is solid. But don't fall for a fake seal—check to make sure the site really complies at www.truste.org. **TIP** If the policy is pages of legalese, avoid eyeball meltdown by using the "Find" function (Control+F on a PC; command+F on a Mac) and search for terms such as "share personal information," "personally identifiable information," "opt-out," and "opt-in."
-  **Step 3: SEE WHAT BBB.ORG SAYS.** Look for the BBB Online Reliability Program seal on a site's home page. (Clicking on the seal should take you directly to BBB.org). Or go to www.bbb.org/us/Find-Business-Reviews and search by the company name or URL. Look for a rating of "satisfactory" or a grade of at least C-. Keep in mind that some smaller sites aren't listed, and plenty of excellent sites aren't yet accredited. And don't get too hung up by the number of complaints alone. A real red flag is not the number of complaints but the number of unresolved complaints. **TIP** You can also search for seller ratings on sites such as Yahoo, or go to Google and type in the merchant name and "seller ratings," or type in the merchant name and "complaints." If something looks fishy, try searching for the site at www.ripoffreport.com and www.complaintsboard.com.

IF YOU HAVE A BAD EXPERIENCE

You can share your gripes by clicking on "File a complaint" at these organizations' sites:

Better Business Bureau at www.bbbonline.org/us.

On Guard Online, a division of the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency, at www.onguardonline.gov.

Internet Crime Complaint Center, backed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, at www.ic3.gov.



HOW DO YOU CLICK?

We surveyed 1,000 women across the country in a new ShopSmart poll, and it turns out that we're shopping from the comfort of our couches now more than ever. How do your habits compare with the average online shopper's?

SHOPPING SMART

87% use online coupons at least some of the time.

16% said they never make a purchase without a coupon.

63% say they sometimes wait to buy until the item goes on sale or they get a coupon.



Why we do it online

79% of women use the Internet to buy products they can't find in their area.

4% use it to buy items they're embarrassed to buy at a store.

12% say they shop online so that they can hide purchases from their spouse.

Favorite things to buy online

41% said clothing is No. 1.

31% books.

18% household items.

16% electronics.

What you won't buy online

25% said food and groceries.

16% clothing.

14% shoes.

13% appliances.

Does it make my butt look big?

83% of online shoppers seek feedback before buying.

78% read user reviews.

25% e-mail links to friends and family.

14% of shoppers ages 18 to 34 post pictures or links on social-networking sites and ask friends for advice.

Retail therapy

23% of the women we surveyed said they plurged on a purchase in the past 12 months to cheer themselves up about the recession. **29%** did their splurge online compared with 73% in stores.

ONLINE SHOPPING BUMMERS

37% of women who shopped online in the past year had a negative experience.

28% of those women said an item they bought wasn't what they expected, was the wrong size or color, or was of poor quality.

22% never got the item. **5%** said their credit-card info was stolen.

4% said they fell for a scam offer.

CALLING ALL SHOPPERS! One in 10 women have used their cell phone to look up info while in a store—but only 6 percent say they've used their phone to buy something online.

15 fun shopping phone apps

Is that Sony TV in the store a good price? Or is there a coupon you can use for that oil change? Check your phone! Shopping applications let you compare prices, download scannable coupons, and more. The iPhone has the most apps, but other phones (and the iPod Touch) have cool ones, too, and many of them are free or just a couple of dollars. Here are some of our favorites:



COUPONS

Coupon Sherpa
What it does Finds scannable coupons for shoes, shades, sports stuff, and more, including deals in your area.
Phone iPhone (iPhone apps also work on the iPod Touch; download them from the iPhone App Store)
Price Free

MobiQpons
What it does Finds scannable coupons. Look for offers from your favorite stores; you can even set it to block offers from stores you don't like.
Phone iPhone, Blackberry (download using Blackberry App World at blackberry.com/appworld), Google Android (Android Market at android.com/market)
Price Free

DOING THE MATH

Check Please
What it does Lets you split the check and figure out the tip, too.
Phone iPhone
Price Free (ad-free version is 99 cents)

CompareMe
What it does The math: Which is a better value, the bigger carton of OJ or the smaller one? This app figures it out for you.
Phone iPhone
Price \$1.99

Sale Price
What it does Calculates the sale price of an item and factors in your coupons and the sales tax to give you the actual final price.
Phone iPhone
Price Free

GROCERY AND FOOD

Epicurious
What it does Lets you search for recipes and creates a shopping list.
Phone iPhone
Price Free

Grocery Gadget Lite
What it does Keeps your grocery list online, with photos, if you like, and arranges items in the order they're found in the store. You can even update your hubby's list while he's in the store.
Phone iPhone
Price Free

PRICE COMPARISONS

Fruccall
What it does Sends you price comparisons one of three ways: phone call, text, or on the Web.
Phone Any cell phone (sign

up at www.fruccall.com)
Price Free

ShopSavvy
What it does Turns your phone's camera into a bar-code scanner (you can also enter a product's number or title), finds the prices locally and online, then links you to a site or gives you driving directions to a store (be sure your GPS function is on!).
Phone Google Android; also expected for the iPhone
Price Free

GETTING ORGANIZED

CardStar
What it does Consolidates all your store membership, discount, club, and rewards cards. A cashier can scan the bar code right off the phone.
Phone iPhone
Price Free

Cha-Ching
What it does Tracks your spending and reminds you when bills are due so that you're never late.
Phone iPhone
Price \$2.99

iTrackMine
What it does Helps you track what you have and where the deals are. Do I have this already? Is this a good price?
Phone Any Web-enabled phone (get it at www.itrackmine.com)
Price Free

Shopper
What it does Helps you make shopping lists and totals up your purchases, which can help you stick to your list and your budget.
Phone iPhone
Price 99 cents

GETTING THE SCOOP

BNB (Be Nice to Bunnies)
What it does Helps you shop cruelty-free, for cosmetics and other products not tested on animals. You can also find out whether an item is vegan.
Phone iPhone
Price \$1.99

SnapTell
What it does You take a picture of a book, CD, DVD, or video game to get user reviews sent right to your screen. It's one-click easy, but you have to be still to take a clear photo. With Android, it can scan the bar code.
Phone iPhone, Android
Price Free

NEVER SHOP ALONE AGAIN

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter aren't just for gabbing with friends. You can now use them to save money on your favorite products and at your favorite stores. In addition to trolling for discount codes, you can find product updates, get instant customer service, and even receive freebies. You can also get feedback from folks who've bought a product and maybe even chat with the person who designed it. Just watch out for scams and imposters on social-networking sites—be sure pages and feeds are actually run (or at least supported) by the brand. Most companies have a list of their Twitter accounts on their own Web sites. For example, you can find Dell's authorized accounts at www.dell.com/twitter. On Facebook, just click on the page's Info tab for details on the creator.

Check company sites for links to their own social networking sites. Sears and Kmart are leaders here; at www.mysears.com and www.mykmart.com they encourage customers to mingle and post reviews of their products.

facebook

You can become a fan of your favorite brands and get the scoop on new products, discounts, and giveaways. In the past Zappos has offered passes to its private membership site (free overnight shipping!).
TIP Take advantage of the Facebook feature that suggests brands and companies you might like based on your profile.

kaboodle

At this online community built around shopping, you can log on to see what other users like, list your favorite items and share them with others, and ask your online pals for input when you're stumped about what to buy.
TIP Get input on your shopping decisions (the red mini or the black-and-white sundress?), post a poll, and solicit opinions from people in the know.

twitter

You can sign up to "follow" companies and read their tweets to save. Want to know who's giving stuff away? Follow @shopping_sf (twitter.com/shopping_sf) for a constantly updated list. To check out companies and track down sale announcements, enter the company name at search.twitter.com.

TIP When you need customer service, try Twitter first. You might get help faster than by contacting customer service by phone. Dell's Twitter team uses its 60-plus accounts to field questions. Jet Blue says it uses Twitter in case it can assist travelers in real time.

MONEY SAVER! Use your cell phone as a bargaining tool. One of our staffers negotiated a deal at an electronics store by showing the sales clerk a lower price at a competitor's Web site that she called up on her phone.