

Consumer Corner

Becoming A Savvy Online Shopper

(NAPSA)—As Americans continue to feel the pinch of a tightening economy, a growing number have turned to Internet shopping to save some cash. In fact, on a typical day, the average Web user now spends about 24 minutes shopping online, according to the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

If you count yourself among those online shoppers, or if you'd like to join their ranks, the following expert tips could help you save time and money—and stay safe.

Shop Smart

Use comparison Web sites to find prices on similar products from thousands of different vendors. Just search “Comparison Price Sites” and start seeing how you might save. Also, certain free-membership Web sites let you earn cash back or accumulate points that can be redeemed for merchandise or coupons when you make purchases. The more you shop, the more you can earn.

Find Freebies

Look for Web sites that offer free goods, such as FreeInternet.com. It links users up with coupons, as well as free offers, product samples, free shipping and “buy one, get one free” deals. The site features hundreds of retailers and thousands of deals ranging from \$5 off a bouquet of long-stemmed roses to free coffee samples or dog treats. There are even deals on travel, gift cards and chances to enter sweepstakes.



You can find Web sites that link you with free products, coupons and “buy one, get one free” deals.

Do Your Homework

Check out Web sites that rate consumer products before making a major purchase. You can also visit the Better Business Bureau Web site at www.bbb.org to learn about companies you're thinking of doing business with online.

Shop Safe

Be sure to limit your shopping to reputable Web sites and never give your personal information out over the Web unless you have a secure connection. Typically, your browser will display special icons such as a padlock or key to indicate secure sites. Merchants often inform you on their Web sites if they have taken security precautions, as well. Also, be sure the site lists a business address and working phone number, so you can contact the company should a problem occur.

For more information, visit www.freeinternet.com.