Prevent Online Shopping from Busting Your Budget

From cat food to cars, commodities of all kinds are available to purchase online. And when clicking the "buy now" button is the only thing between you and a hefty credit card charge, it

can be easy to overspend. Add online marketing algorithms to the equation, where "you might also like" items are served up at every turn, and your shopping cart can quickly fill up with things you didn't intend to buy — and don't need.

If you find yourself choosing "click to purchase" increasingly often, you are not alone. According to Forbes, more than 20% of retail purchases are expected to be made online in 2023. So how do you rein in spending when shopping from the comfort of your couch has become so convenient?

Savvy shopping

Price comparison shopping has never been so easy. Online tools such as Google Shopping and PriceGrabber enable you to sort by many criteria including brand, customer rating and price, helping you make better, more informed buying decisions. Look at which retailers offer the product you're looking for and determine which one offers the best fit for your needs and budget. But stay focused on your intended purchase, and don't get lured into spending more than you intended by flash sales, pop-up ads and limited time offers. Also, avoid using online shopping as "retail therapy," which can quickly lead to overspending and bloated credit card bills.

Fee fiascos

Take shipping, processing and delivery fees into account when calculating your total price. Look for free shipping options but keep a close eye on the minimum price requirement. Sometimes free shipping can be a lure to get you to spend more than you'd bargained for. Did you throw that cat hammock in your cart at the last minute just to score free shipping? Keep an eye on total costs – and don't lose the forest for the trees.

Trustworthy transactions

Online reviews can help guide shoppers toward quality purchases from reliable sellers. Consider checking independent review sites such as Yelp, Trip Advisor and Consumer Reports. Doing a little homework up front can help you avoid costly, time-consuming problems with disreputable dealers, such as poor product quality, failed delivery, or lack of warranty. Search through reviews to see how users who have made returns rate the seller's customer support. You may also want to use a credit card that offers purchase protection in case something goes awry with your transaction.

Digital discounts

Use online coupon apps and tools to help score deals, such as Coupons.com or RetailMeNot. Beyond offering discounts, these sites make shopping even more convenient by listing a variety of deals in one place. You can find coupons for everything — but don't get swayed into buying a can crusher or sweater nub shaver you don't really need just because of the 20% coupon you found online.

Buying boundaries

To help minimize impulse buys, always make a shopping list. You may not use it to navigate the aisles of a supermarket or big box retailer, but a list can still help you stay on target with your spending by helping prevent wandering eyes when shopping at your favorite online retailer. The bottom line: If it's not on your list, keep it out of your cart. When you visit a brick-and-mortar store with cash, there's an automatic limit on what you can spend. But online shopping by default is done by credit card, so you must impose your own limits.

Final Words of Wisdom

And a few final quick tips before hitting the cybermall: opt out of online sales notifications, use ad blockers to avoid seeing ads targeted to your purchasing preferences and set time limits when perusing products online. Because when there's no limit to how much your shopping cart can hold and the store never closes, you can easily shop 'till you drop … too much of your hard-earned money.

Sources

[Forbes.com, 38 E-Commerce Statistics Of 2023](#) ⧉