

**BE  
A  
GOOD  
SHOPPER**

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII  
HOME ECONOMICS CIRCULAR 348



# Be a Good Shopper

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To be a good shopper you need to plan what to buy, when to buy, and where to buy. This is not easy. There are so many goods and services to choose from. By careful shopping you may get more for your money.



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# Plan First

**PLAN AT HOME.** This is where good buying begins. Make decisions before you start your shopping trip. Wise shoppers buy needed things first, then add the extras. Your family's needs will not be the same as those of your friends, neighbors, or relatives. As you plan keep in mind—

- what you have
- what you need
- how the item will be used
- what size, color, quantity, quality, you want
- the price you want to pay.

**MAKE A SHOPPING LIST.** This takes time, but a good shopper makes a list. Jot down items as you think of them. Organize your list by the location of stores and the location of things within the store. This will save backtracking, prevent forgetting something, and help stop you from buying something you don't need.

**DECIDE ON QUALITY.** When you decide the type and quality you want in an item, consider:

- how you will use the article
- how long you will use it
- how you will care for it
- how it looks.

Remember that you don't always need the best quality. Irregulars or seconds are good for many uses.



# Compare Price and Quality



Many goods and services are available. Prices and quality vary. Compare them. You may find the same washing machine, shirt, or tie sold by different stores at different prices.

Study the product carefully. Read the label. Look to see if the product is well made. Is it made of good or poor material?

There are many ways you can learn about quality and price.

Some of them are:

- labels
- U. S. grades and inspection stamps
- guarantees
- Government bulletins
- magazines and books
- advertising.



## labels

**LABELS.** *Read the label.* It can help you compare price in terms of quality. It may tell facts required by law for your protection. Manufacturers often list on labels of food, drugs, and cosmetics exactly what is in the package. Packaged foods have contents listed in order of quantity—that is, the ingredient there's the most of will be listed first. On some foods, you'll find U. S. grade and inspection stamps that show quality and wholesomeness.

Good informative labels give facts such as—

- what the item is made of
- size and number
- the care it needs
- how to use it.

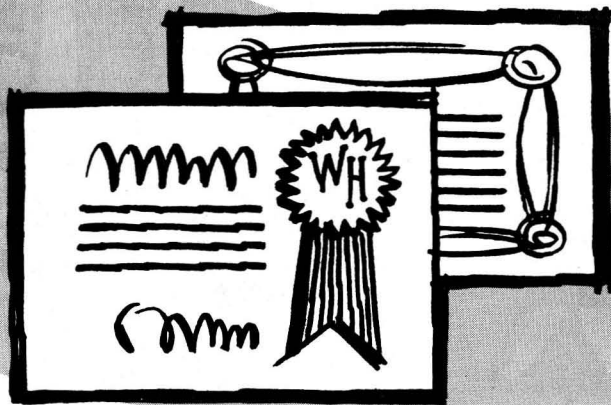
These facts can help you save money, compare quality and price, and take better care of the item you buy.

# guarantees

**GUARANTEES.** A guarantee is as good as the people who give it. Know the if's, and's, and but's connected with it. The Federal Trade Commission has set up a guide to help make guarantees more meaningful. In general, the guide requires a company to:

- explain terms of the guarantee
- be prepared to back it up.

*Read a guarantee carefully.* Check to see what it covers. How long will it be in force? Is the whole item included or or just a part of it? Who is making the guarantee? A dated receipt will help you make a claim.



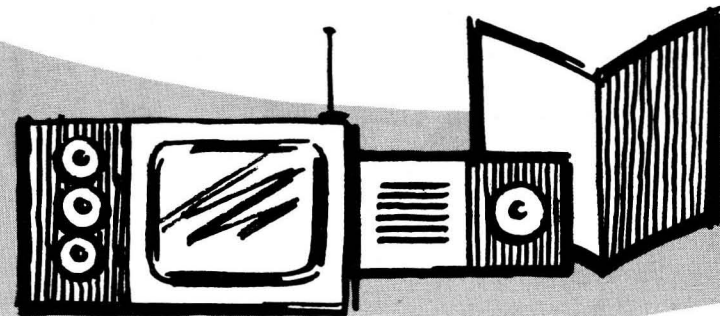
# advertising

**ADVERTISING.** Advertising can work for you. It is one way to learn what products are available, where to buy them, and how much they cost.

*Learn to recognize facts in advertising.* Look for price, size, color, material, and quality. An ad may mislead you. Words such as "regular value" may mean very little. If an ad says "reduced from \$49.95 to \$39.95" this may be a real cut in price. On big purchases, check the price of the same item at other stores.

*Watch for bait ads.* These are just a way to get you into the store. You can suspect an ad is bait when an item is offered at a very low price and:

- You are told the item was sold out and are asked to look at something else—usually more expensive.
- The salesman is unwilling to show the advertised item.
- The salesman talks down the advertised product, wants you to buy something else.
- Only the floor sample is left and you are told it can be ordered but will take a long time.



# Sales

Sales are held for many reasons.

- To make room for new goods.
- To sell surplus or shop-worn goods.
- To get you into the store.
- To introduce new products.

The best sales are held by established stores. They want to keep your good will and your business.

When you buy at sales—

- Consider the time, energy, and money costs of getting to the sale.
- Shop at the start of the sale for the best selection.
- Be sure the sale price is an actual reduction from the regular price.
- Watch for imperfect or damaged articles.
- Check styles; items likely to go out of style may be poor buys.
- Remember, nothing is a bargain unless you need it.

**SEASONAL SALES.** These usually come at the end of the season. Sometimes they come just before the new season's stock arrives. Excellent bargains are frequently offered on appliances, furniture, furs, apparel, linens, rugs, and household accessories. Examples of seasonal sales are:

- January—white goods
- February and August—furniture
- April—after Easter clothing
- July—spring and summer clothing.

**PRIVATE SALES.** These are usually held several days before a public announcement of the sale. Everybody who has a charge account or is a regular customer gets the word in advance.

**SPECIAL PURCHASE SALES.** Store buyers pick up goods from manufacturers or wholesalers at cut prices. The savings may be passed along to the customers. Such sales are worth watching for. Some special purchases are goods of standard quality. Some are seconds or otherwise imperfect items. Read the descriptions carefully. You will want to see if quality and price are in balance.

**ANNIVERSARY SALES.** These are store-wide promotions. Watch for real bargains. Are below-standard items "on sale" without a real price cut?





**CLOSE-OUTS.** Some sales are intended to clean out stocks of appliances, clothing, and other merchandise which is outdated. You might find bargains.

**ONE-DAY SALES.** These are held mostly in big cities, usually at the time of a holiday. Buy only things you recognize as a bargain and really need.

**PENNY SALES.** For a penny over the regular price you get two identical items instead of one. Know the regular price before you buy.

**DOLLAR DAY.** These can offer good buys if the items were priced well over a dollar before the sale.

# Your Protection

Protective agencies and organizations help us get what we pay for. They are:

**BETTER BUSINESS BUREAUS.** These are voluntary non-profit organizations. Businessmen set them up and pay for them. They fight fraud in advertising and selling. They encourage fair dealings between businessmen and customers. Call the Bureau in your area to:

- Inquire about a store
- Report complaints.

The Bureau investigates complaints. If the facts show there is fraud, the case may be turned over to the proper Government agency.

**THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION** tries to prevent false or misleading advertising. The FTC is also authorized to prevent false pricing. It is responsible for enforcing labeling laws concerning fiber content of clothing and household fabrics.

You may write a complaint to the FTC. Many times a correction can be made. If it is not, the FTC may order the advertising stopped.

**THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION** enforces laws to protect you from buying foods, drugs, cosmetics, and health appliances that may be harmful.



# Your Responsibility

You are important. You and other consumers have power in influencing prices and market conditions. You help guide production by the things you buy. You can help yourself and others if you:

- Try to be an informed shopper.
- Report your wants, likes, and dislikes to dealers and manufacturers so they can serve you better.
- Praise and buy from dealers who sell better goods and services at reasonable prices.
- Avoid hasty buying which causes unnecessary returns.
- Pay bills promptly.
- Inform proper agencies of dishonesty, fraud, or law violations.



**AVOID IMPULSE BUYING.** Decide what you will buy before you get to a store. Spur-of-the-moment decisions can wreck your family spending plan. To avoid impulse buying:

- Shop with a list.
- Shop for food yourself, or train others in the family to shop wisely.
- Ask questions such as "When will I use use it?"—"Where will I store it?"
- Make a rule to "sleep on" a major purchase. The offer should be just as good the next day.
- Beware of your mood when you shop—when you are tired or hungry you are influenced easier.
- Try not to shop when you have to hurry.
- Have a spending plan for longer periods, and try to stick with it.
- Include in your spending plan the amount you can spend "just for fun."

## Smart Shopping Tips

- Shop for best buys—compare quality and price.
- Read the label.
- Count your change, watch weights and measures, check sales slips.
- Read before you sign—watch the fine print in purchase contracts.