

10 Money-Saving Tricks Furniture Stores Don't Want You to Know

We all know that furniture doesn't come cheap. But here's the good news: You don't have to spend top dollar on a new couch or dining table. There are sneaky ways to find bargains that furniture stores don't want you to know.

But we know, and we're going to share them with you! Here are some hacks and tips that will help you buy new furniture for less dough.

1. Call ahead to stores

Bargains abound in furniture stores if you spend time comparing prices and calling ahead to stores to ask for the best price.

When Checkbook, a consumer group, sent secret shoppers to furniture stores, it found that the same credenza ranged from \$1,500 to \$2,800 depending on the store. And that wasn't a one-off.

"We see price differences like this for most things we shop for," says Kevin Brasler, executive editor of Checkbook.

Sure, you can go store to store to comparison shop. But making a few phone calls beforehand will save you loads of time and energy.

2. Walk a little farther

Walk to corners and all the way to the back of stores. That's where floor models, scratched tables, and sofas with tiny imperfections hide in plain sight—you know, those items that come with deeply discounted price tags. Take advantage.

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3. Cash in on register discounts

Even if a sofa is on sale, you might be able to knock down the price even more at the cash register. Some stores display their bottom-line prices on the register-computer, so cashiers know how low they can go. If you ask for the last, best price, the cashier might be able to give it to you.

4. Buy returned furniture

Sometimes furniture doesn't find a forever home the first time it's sold. But one buyer's castoff can be another's bargain. When shopping in stores, ask salespeople if any returns are available at discount.

5. Brush up on your bargaining skills

You know you can negotiate the price of a house or car, but did you know you can bargain for furniture?

We know—bargaining can be stressful. But if you can muster the energy to flex your negotiating chops, it can pay off. **A 2013 Consumer Reports survey found that 87% of shoppers who haggled were rewarded at least once.** Successful furniture hagglers saved \$300 on average, Consumer Reports says.

Some store salespeople and, of course, managers have the discretion to reduce prices even below the stated discount. They can dig up a coupon you didn't bring. (A cashier once went through trash to find me an extra 10%-off coupon that another customer already used.) They can discount or remove delivery charges, especially if you buy more than one item. But you have to ask. If you don't ask, you don't get.

6. Re-evaluate the extended warranty

For high-priced items, extended warranties can be a good idea. These are warranties that cover repairs that aren't covered by the manufacturer's warranty, or will extend coverage after the manufacturer's warranty expires.

But if you're not careful, they can also be a real black hole for your wallet. Consumer experts say extended warranties often cost more than they're worth—in other words, you'll spend less on a potential repair than you will shelling out for the warranty in the first place. We won't tell you to skip it, but you should crunch the numbers and proceed with caution.

7. Use coupons

Many post offices offer a moving kit loaded with coupons when you fill out a change-of-address form. And typically some of those coupons will be for deals and discounts at furniture and home improvement stores. Not moving? Muster the guts to ask your post office for a moving kit anyway.

Some Realtors use such coupons, too, as a marketing tool and perk. Ask for them. And while you're at it, ask your preferred retailers if they offer some of their own. If so, the discounts could be substantial.

8. Bite the bullet and ask for a senior discount

Some furniture-selling department stores specifically offer the over-55 crowd large and small discounts. For example, Bon-Ton, which has stores in 23 states, runs a Senior Day once a month in many locations. Seniors get a 10% to 20% discount depending on how they pay. Be sure to call the store before showing up and demanding a discount. Self-conscious about asking for the senior discount? Deal with reality. Your bank account will thank you.

9. Shop estate sales

Most of my living room is filled with furniture I bought at estate sales for hundreds of dollars—rather than the thousands I could've spent in store. Most gently used estate furniture is priced at 30% to 50% below what you'd pay new, according to Blue Moon Estate Sales, which has 14 locations along the East Coast.

To make the most of estate sales:

- Arrive early
- Know what you're looking for
- Select older furniture that's built to last
- Take a chance and wait until Sunday, the last day of the sale when you can get the best bargains if your treasure is still there. The people running the sale often would rather take a little money than have to pack it up and ship it to the dump, or donate it to a charity.

10. Recycle, reuse

The last thing stores want is for you to upcycle your existing household items. But you can sand and paint an old door, and use it for a table or desk. Remove the drawers from an old dresser, and make it into a new bookcase or bench. The trick is to look at tired items with fresh eyes to put money back into your pocket.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2z8MHF4>