

- ▶ Avoiding Impulse Shopping
- ▶ Retail Secrets
- ▶ Emergency Help for Homeowners

Avoiding Impulse Shopping

Between vacations, getting food for a cook-out, and back to school shopping, summer can be tough on the monthly budget. Whether you're shopping for gifts, food, clothes, or back to school supplies, impulse purchases can become a big problem. Every type of store is designed to entice your senses, trying to make you spend more money. By taking a few simple steps, you can help limit impulse purchases to a minimum.

First, always shop with a list. No matter what you're shopping for a list will help you stay focused on what you came to the store to purchase. It helps keep you from being influenced by the sale signs. Also, if you're going to a mall, list the stores that you'll be going into to avoid going into other stores.

A lot of us know not to shop for groceries when we're hungry, but you should always have a clear mind when you go shopping for anything. Think about how your purchases fit in with your long term goals. Remember most of the purchases we make do not ultimately make us happier. Make sure that you have a plan for the item you are buying so you can be certain you'll be satisfied with your purchase.

Limiting the amount of time you're spending in the store will also help. Enter the store with a purpose and then leave once you've accomplished that purpose. The more time you spend in the store, the more likely you are to make impulse purchases.

So whatever you're shopping for, using these tips will help you to avoid impulse buys and have more money in your pocket rather than the store's cash register.

Mortgage Help

Are you facing foreclosure? Is your mortgage delinquent because of involuntary unemployment, underemployment or a medical reason? If so, you might be eligible for the Emergency Homeowners' Loan Program (EHLPP). EHLPP is a declining balance, deferred payment "bridge loan" that helps homeowners bring delinquent mortgages current. Eligibility requirements include:

- Current household income must be equal or less than 120% of the Area Median Income
- Homeowners must be behind by three payments
- Homeowners must be able resume repayment of the mortgage within two years
- The property must be owner occupied and the homeowner's principal residence

If you meet these requirements contact Advantage CCS at 1-888-511-2227 to schedule an appointment. Act fast! The EHLPP program is only available until September 30, 2011.



Q: What happens if my car gets repossessed?

A: When your car is repossessed it means you have missed at least three consecutive payments. The car loan that you have is most likely known as a secured loan. The loan is considered secured because there is property that secures it.

Since there is an asset attached to the loan (your car), the loan company has the right to take that asset back for nonpayment. After it is repossessed, you can pay the amount you are late, plus any additional fees, to have the car returned. If you do not pay the arrears, the car will most likely be sold at auction.

Just because the car is sold at auction does not relieve you of the responsibility for the full loan amount. You will still be responsible to pay the remaining balance of the loan after the auction price is deducted from it. Because of these possible negative consequences, a car loan should be the number two priority in your budget behind the rent or mortgage.

If you're having a hard time making your car payment, you may want to consider scheduling a budget counseling session. One of the Agency's certified credit counselors can provide a budget analysis which help you better understand your finances.

Retailers Best Kept Secrets

If you've been in a retail store lately you may have walked out having spent more than you originally planned. If this has happened to you, it's probably not all your fault. For years, retailers have been using subtle tactics to try to get some extra money out of your wallet. Since it's unlikely they'll stop these tactics, it pays to know some of them so they can't be used against you.

First off, beware of large displays inside the store, especially at clothing stores. Usually they'll have a large beautiful picture of someone in an exotic locale wearing the item on display. This obviously makes the item look better and makes you more likely to want to buy it. Also, look out for misleading labels inside the clothing. A lot of retailers will sew in tags with washing instructions in French and English to allow you to infer that the garment was made in France. However, it's more likely the item was actually purchased for a low price from China or Sri Lanka. Be sure to examine the garment's tag to insure that you're not being misled.

Be wary of the right side of the store. Most of the population is right handed or right oriented and retailers know this. Because of this displays are more colorful and music is often louder on the right side of the store. Retailers also usually display the most expensive items in the store on the right side.

We all know what's in the back of the store, the clearance rack. It's pretty easy to figure out why it's there, so you'll be tempted by everything on your way to getting to it. Retailers are hoping that your hands and arms will be so full of stuff that you won't be able to pick up anything from the clearance area.

Make sure you head to the back of the store first without grabbing anything along the way. The clearance area is also usually quite messy and disorganized. There's a reason for this too. Retailers want to create an atmosphere of chaos and confusion in the clearance area because most shoppers don't want to be in that type of area. Poorly marked and unorganized items can lead a shopper to become confused and frustrated. Then the shopper heads to the neat, organized areas of the store, where items are more expensive. Make sure you have plenty of time to peruse the clearance rack. Also, if you're doing clothes shopping for the kids, try to leave them at home for most of the shopping. Ask what they want before you go, and you can always exchange things if they don't like them. You can always make an extra trip with the kids to get a few high priority items if necessary.

When you go to check out, look out for extras placed around the register. These small impulse items are designed by retailers to increase your "ticket price," or the total amount of money you spend in the store.

So next time you decide to head out to the mall, remember that retailers are pushing you to spend around every corner. Make sure you have a list and a plan, and you won't have to worry about spending over your budget.

Source: Bankrate.com

Friend Advantage CCS on Facebook and follow us on Twitter

www.advantageccs.org

Resources

The following websites could help you save money on back-to-school shopping:

<http://organizedhome.com>

<http://coupondivas.com>

www.stretcher.com

www.workitmom.com

www.bankrate.com

The Advantage Challenge

Advantage CCS challenges you to ...plan for back to school shopping with a budget and list. Make a list of everything your child needs for the upcoming school year, do an inventory of what you have already and then head out to shop for the rest. Set a limit on how much you want to spend and stick to it. If you find some things on clearance, consider stocking up and saving them for later in the school year.



Advantage

2403 Sidney St., Suite 400
Pittsburgh, PA 15203
(888) 511-2227
www.advantageccs.org

