

APPENDIX 1: PRODUCTS BUYING CHECKLIST

STRATEGY NO. 1: DON'T BUY ANYTHING

- avoid the purchase** [address my need without buying]
- wait until later** [season's end, next sale, new models]
- use what I already own** [repair, fix, upgrade, closet shop]
- make it myself** [filtered water, cleaners, work lunches]
- get it FREE** [Freecycle, C-Span, ManyBooks.net]
- borrow** [library, friends, neighbors]
- trade or barter** [media, toys, duds]
- rent** [tools, sports gear, tuxedos]
- flip** [buy, use awhile, sell at profit]
- try Group Buynamics** [buy with friends]

STRATEGY NO. 2: BUY SOMETHING ELSE

- buy used** [eBay, Goodwill, yard sales]
- buy the flawed** [seconds, dents, demos, returns]
- buy other technologies** [shovels for snow blowers]
- buy other models** [fewer features, gen3 not gen4]
- buy a part instead of a whole** [upgrades, disk drives]
- buy generic** [bleach, batteries, frozen veggies]
- buy multipurpose merchandise** [heater/fans, 2-way vacs]
- stack tactics to save more** [combine two or more of the above]

STRATEGY NO. 3: RESEARCH THE PRODUCT

- read buying guides and product reviews—**
 - for big ticket items, read buying guides [search web]
 - ConsumerSearch.com, *Consumer Reports*
 - Amazon reviews and bestseller lists
 - CNET, for electronics
 - YouTube [video demos]
 - web reviews [search for name, model no., “reviews”]
 - sources unique to this product [magazines, clubs, blogs]
- ask around** [friends' opinions, chat rooms]
- try before I buy** [loaners, rentals, demos, samples]
- consider hidden ownership costs—**
 - install/set-up
 - disposal [old TVs, tires]
 - storage
 - service and upkeep
 - accessories [cases, rechargers]
 - frequently replaced components [filters, toner]
 - energy use
 - insurance
 - fees, subscriptions, licenses
 - tax impacts [ownership taxes, deductions, credits]
- consider repeating Strategy Nos. 1–2**

**STRATEGY NO. 4:
FIND LOW PRICES**

- **shop around**—
 - search price comparison sites
 - visit web stores not listed on comparison sites
 - search for low prices offline [call stores, read ads]
- **delay buying until sales arrive** [search web: “best time to buy xx”]
- **look for “special offers” on prices**—
 - coupons and codes
 - group discounts [consult lists of discounting sellers for each of my groups]
 - rebates
 - volume discounts
 - discounts for preferred form of payment
 - deal-a-day websites [Groupon, LivingSocial]
- **seek out “deal sweeteners”** [terms other than price]—
 - freebies [delivery, accessories]
 - store loyalty programs [rewards, gift cards]
 - credit card benefits [rewards, extended warranties, price protection]
 - zero percent financing
- **look for “stacking”** [sales+special offers+deal sweeteners]
- **weigh transaction costs** [sales taxes, shipping, my own time]

**STRATEGY NO. 5: PICK A
LOW PRICE SELLER**

- **run background checks** [past dealings, friends’ experience, customer feedback, time in business]
- **review the seller’s policies**—
 - extended warranties
 - price matching before *and* after the sale
 - rain checks and back orders
 - surcharges for credit card purchases
 - returns/exchanges
- **research product support** [repair sites, parts availability, updates]
- **research customer service** [JP Power, *Consumer Reports*, theacsi.org]
- **once I pick a seller, look for discounted gift cards** [*e.g.*, PlasticJungle.com]
- **once I pick a seller, consider haggling** [on prices, deal sweeteners, shipping costs]

**STRATEGY NO. 6:
AVOID PITFALLS**

- ❑ **refuse to pay interest on products** [revisit strategy nos. 1-2]
- ❑ **buy the right size** [measure twice, buy once]
- ❑ **avoid stuff that owns me** [spas, RVs, ATVs]
- ❑ **sweep away dust gatherers** [pasta makers]
- ❑ **never pay extra for prestige**
- ❑ **beware of buying too cheap** [seek values, not lowest prices]
- ❑ **decline to be an “early adopter”** [newest iWhatever]
- ❑ **reject fads** [pet rocks, eight-tracks]
- ❑ **read contracts before signing them**
- ❑ **say no to middlemen who add no value**
- ❑ **plan ahead for big ticket items**
- ❑ **beware of deals “too good to be true”**
- ❑ **sidestep the “bait and switch”**
- ❑ **forgo bells and whistles**

**STRATEGY NO. 7:
FOLLOW UP**

- ❑ **confirm terms of sale** [check receipt, shipping manifest]
- ❑ **inspect for imperfections** [dings, defects, malfunctions]
- ❑ **register with manufacturer** [for recalls, upgrades, news]
- ❑ **retain receipts, packaging, manuals** [returns, resale, taxes]
- ❑ **monitor price drops** [seller or credit card might match]
- ❑ **visit chat rooms** [vehicles, appliances, software]
- ❑ **buy duplicates** [if item discontinued]
- ❑ **make the item last** [know rules for operation, upkeep]
- ❑ **keep a “checklist savings log”** [see Chapter 47]