



BLACK
FRIDAY

Black Friday for Beginners

If you're new to the Black Friday experience, you might be imagining scenes of chaos, long lines and crowded parking lots.

While those moments still exist in some places, today's Black Friday is more varied, more strategic and, for many, more fun — especially with a little planning.

Whether you're heading out before sunrise to snag doorbusters or planning a more casual afternoon outing, here's what every first-time shopper should know.

START WITH A PLAN

Black Friday is not the day to window shop. The best deals often go fast, and wandering aimlessly can mean missed opportunities or overspending on impulse purchases. Before the big day, research the stores you want to visit. Check their opening times, advertised deals and any doorbuster restrictions. Make a prioritized list of what you're shopping for and bring it with you.

STICK TO A BUDGET

It's easy to get swept up in the excitement of limited-time deals. But remember: 40% off is still too much if it's not something you need or can afford. Set a budget for each person on your gift list and track your spending throughout the day. Bring a calculator or use your phone's



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budgeting app to help.

DRESS COMFORTABLY AND SMARTLY

If you're hitting the stores in person, your outfit matters more than you might think. Wear layers in case you move between cold parking lots and warm stores. Choose comfortable shoes, and if you're planning to carry a lot, consider a crossbody bag or backpack so your hands are free.

EXPECT CROWDS

Even with more people

shopping online, in-store Black Friday crowds are still a reality. Lines may form outside before doors open, and popular items can draw a crowd. Keep your cool, respect other shoppers and staff, and avoid confrontations. A little patience and good humor go a long way.

KNOW RETURN POLICIES

Before you buy, check the store's return policy. Some Black Friday deals are final sale, and others may have shorter return windows. Hang onto receipts and ask for gift

receipts if you're shopping for others.

USE YOUR PHONE

Your smartphone can be your best Black Friday ally. Use it to compare prices on the spot, scan barcodes, or check whether an item is available online for less. Many retailers offer mobile-only coupons or price-matching options, just be ready to show proof.

HAVE A BACKUP PLAN

Sometimes the deal you're chasing sells out before you

get there. Don't let that ruin your day. Identify backup items or alternative stores in advance so you can pivot without stress.

CONSIDER SHOPPING WITH A BUDDY

Black Friday is more fun — and more efficient — when shared. Divide and conquer lists, take turns in line, and enjoy the thrill of the hunt together. Remember, the goal isn't just to save money. It's to shop smart, enjoy the experience and maybe even make it a new holiday tradition.

Evolution of Black Friday

For years, Black Friday was defined by long lines, early morning crowds and the occasional headline-grabbing stampede.

But over the past two decades, the day after Thanksgiving has undergone a dramatic transformation, one that reflects larger shifts in retail, technology and consumer behavior.

What was once a one-day, in-store event has become a week-long (or even month-long) hybrid of digital and physical shopping, with online deals often rivaling or beating their in-store counterparts.

FROM THE PARKING LOT TO THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

Not long ago, Black Friday meant setting a 4 a.m. alarm, bundling up and standing in line outside big-box retailers in hopes of snagging a doorbuster deal. Customers braved the cold and the crowds, strategizing routes through store aisles with printed circulars in hand.

But today, many of those same deals — and sometimes better ones — are just a few taps away. Retailers now roll out their Black Friday sales online days or even weeks in advance. Cyber Monday has merged with Black Friday into a long weekend of discounts, and “Cyber Week” often extends the shopping spree even further.



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RETAILERS ADAPT TO THE DIGITAL SHIFT

The rise of e-commerce giants like Amazon changed the game. Consumers got used to fast shipping, real-time price drops and shopping from home. Traditional retailers followed suit, building out

online platforms, expanding app functionality and offering “online-only” deals to compete.

Curbside pickup and same-day delivery options, especially popular during the pandemic, have become a staple for shoppers who want the

convenience of online ordering with the immediacy of in-person shopping.

LESS FRENZY, MORE FLEXIBILITY

For many consumers, the new Black Friday is calmer and more manageable. The

urgency of lining up at midnight has given way to browsing deals on a lunch break or setting up digital alerts for specific items.

Still, some shoppers miss the excitement of the in-store rush. For them, brick-and-mortar stores continue to offer limited-time deals, doorbusters and early opening hours. But retailers are increasingly careful to avoid the chaotic scenes of years past, focusing instead on customer experience and safety.

THE RISE OF VALUES-BASED SHOPPING

As Black Friday evolves, so does its meaning. Some shoppers now use the day to support small businesses or ethical brands. Movements like Small Business Saturday and Giving Tuesday have reframed the weekend into more than just a consumer bonanza; it's a chance to spend thoughtfully and locally.

WHAT IT MEANS GOING FORWARD

Black Friday is no longer a single day — it's a season. For retailers, that means a longer window to capture sales and build customer loyalty. For shoppers, it offers more flexibility, less stress and greater choice. From crowded aisles to curated carts, Black Friday has shifted with the times. While the chaos may have quieted, the spirit of deal-hunting lives on, just with fewer elbows and more Wi-Fi.

Apps that Can Save You Money

Black Friday may be all about the deals, but the real savings often happen behind the scenes thanks to your smartphone.

With the right apps, savvy shoppers can uncover hidden discounts, track price drops in real time, earn cashback and scan receipts for post-purchase rewards.

If you're looking to stretch your dollars even further this holiday season, consider downloading a few of these money-saving tools before the big day.

HONEY

Honey is a browser extension that automatically scans and applies coupon codes at checkout.

It works with thousands of online retailers and even tracks price history so you can see if a discount is really as good as it seems. The Droplist feature lets you save an item and receive an alert when the price drops.

RAKUTEN (FORMERLY EBATES)

Get paid to shop. Rakuten partners with hundreds of retailers to offer cashback on your purchases.

Just shop through the app or browser extension, and Rakuten tracks your spending, sending quarterly checks or PayPal payments for your earnings.

IBOTTA

Originally focused on grocery rebates, Ibotta now includes online retailers and Black Friday deals. After making a qualifying purchase, you upload a photo of your receipt or link your store account to receive cash back. Bonus: You can stack Ibotta savings with store coupons or other cash-back apps.

FLIPP

Flipp is ideal for deal hunters who love paper circulars but want digital convenience. It gathers weekly ads from

your favorite stores and lets you search for specific products or categories. You can also create a shopping list tied directly to current deals in your area.

SHOPSAVVY

When you're in-store and wondering if that item is actually a deal, ShopSavvy has your back. Scan the barcode and the app will instantly compare prices at local and online retailers. You can also set alerts for price drops on specific items.

CAPITAL ONE SHOPPING

Similar to Honey, this extension finds coupon codes and offers price comparisons across major retailers. It also tracks price changes and can alert you to better deals elsewhere, even if you're already on a retailer's website.

FETCH REWARDS

Snap a picture of any receipt — even gas or takeout — and earn points you can redeem for gift cards. Squeeze value out of everyday purchases, including Black Friday shopping.

TIPS FOR APP SUCCESS

- Sign up early and log in before Black Friday so you're ready to shop.
 - Check for app-only or mobile-exclusive deals.
 - Use more than one app to stack savings (just don't double-dip in violation of any terms).
 - Turn on push notifications to get deal alerts in real time.
- With a little digital assistance, your phone can do more than help you shop; it can help you save with every swipe.



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Black Friday for the Minimalist

Black Friday is often associated with crowds, chaos and carts brimming with impulse buys.

But for those who value simplicity, sustainability or minimalism, the annual shopping holiday doesn't have to mean overconsumption.

Whether you're aiming to reduce waste, live with less or just shop more intentionally, it's still possible to participate in Black Friday while staying true to your values.

START WITH PURPOSE, NOT PRESSURE

The minimalist approach to Black Friday starts before you set foot in a store or open a browser.

Ask yourself what you truly need. Are there items you've been waiting to purchase at a discount? Are you buying gifts that will be appreciated and used or just filling a quota? Make a list, set a budget, and avoid browsing just for the sake of it.

Instead of chasing the biggest pile of markdowns, look for well-made items that will last. Invest in a durable kitchen appliance, quality clothing or eco-friendly home goods. Buying fewer items that serve you well is a core minimalist principle and Black Friday deals can make those purchases more accessible.



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SHOP WITH SUSTAINABILITY IN MIND

Support brands that prioritize ethical sourcing, sustainable materials and fair labor practices. Many eco-conscious companies participate in Black Friday or run parallel campaigns like Green Friday or Giving Tuesday. Shopping with these brands allows you to enjoy the season's savings without compromising your values.

Gifts don't always have to come in boxes. Black Friday deals often include discounts on travel, classes, memberships and event tickets.

Consider gifting a museum pass, a cooking class or a weekend getaway. Experiences create lasting memories and don't add clutter.

AVOID THE HYPE TRAP

Marketing around Black Friday is designed to trigger urgency — "limited time only," "while supplies last" and "doorbuster deals" are meant to encourage impulse buying. Take a breath before each purchase. Will this item bring long-term value to your life? Does it align with your goals? If not, it's OK to walk away.

Minimalists often value

connection and community over mass-produced goods. Supporting local businesses on Black Friday or Small Business Saturday can be a way to give meaningful gifts, reduce your carbon footprint, and keep money circulating in your neighborhood.

LIMIT PACKAGING AND WASTE

Look for products with minimal or recyclable packaging. If you're buying gifts, consider wrapping them in reusable fabric, newspapers or simple brown paper instead of glittery, non-

recyclable options. Little choices can reduce waste in a big way.

OR SKIP IT ENTIRELY

Some minimalists choose to sit out Black Friday altogether, and that's perfectly fine. You don't have to buy anything to honor the season. Taking a nature walk, volunteering or spending time with loved ones can be just as fulfilling.

Black Friday doesn't have to be about excess. With a thoughtful approach, it can be an opportunity to support values that matter and to celebrate the joy of less.

Black Friday Etiquette

Black Friday may be famous for its big bargains, but it's also earned a reputation for long lines, crowded aisles and, occasionally, frayed tempers.

With so many shoppers chasing limited-time deals, it's easy to forget that a little courtesy can go a long way.

Whether you're a seasoned deal-hunter or new to the rush, here are some tips for keeping things civil and festive while you shop.

RESPECT THE LINE

No deal is worth cutting in front of others. Line etiquette starts outside the store and continues inside at checkout lanes, customer service counters and limited-stock displays. Everyone wants to get in and out quickly, so wait your turn and be patient. If you're saving a spot for someone, let those around you know early.

BE KIND TO RETAIL WORKERS

Store employees often start their shifts before sunrise and may work long hours during the holiday weekend. They didn't set the prices, stock the shelves or cause the lines, so treat them with kindness and patience.

A "thank you" or a smile can brighten a long day.



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KEEP YOUR COOL OVER HOT ITEMS

It's frustrating to miss out on the last doorbuster deal, but don't take it out on other shoppers. Avoid grabbing, arguing or hovering aggressively near items. If someone picks up something you wanted, let it go. Another deal will come along, and a positive attitude makes the experience better for everyone.

MIND YOUR CART MANNERS

Shopping carts can turn tight

aisles into traffic jams. Keep yours close and out of the way when browsing. If you're waiting for someone, pull off to the side to avoid blocking others. And if you bump into someone, a quick apology keeps things friendly.

PUT ITEMS BACK WHERE THEY BELONG

If you change your mind about a product, try to return it to the correct shelf or hand it to an employee. Leaving unwanted items in random places creates clutter and con-

fusion for other shoppers.

WATCH YOUR VOLUME

Stores can get noisy during Black Friday, but shouting across aisles or taking loud phone calls only adds to the chaos. Keep your conversations at a reasonable level and step aside if you need to take a call.

SHARE THE SPACE

If you're shopping with a group, be mindful not to clog aisles or crowd displays. Let others have a turn looking at sale bins or promotional racks.

A little awareness goes a long way.

Black Friday can be exciting and rewarding, but it's not a competition. Approach the day with a spirit of generosity and good humor. A cheerful attitude will not only improve your experience, it might just be the thing someone else needs to turn their day around.

At the heart of the holidays is connection, not conflict. A successful Black Friday is one where you find great deals and help spread a little joy along the way.

Prep Your Tech For Deal-Hunting

In the age of digital discounts and real-time price drops, your phone, tablet or laptop may be your most valuable Black Friday shopping tool.

To make the most of it, a little prep goes a long way.

Whether you're braving the in-store rush or browsing from the comfort of home, here's how to get your tech ready for the biggest shopping day of the year.

CHARGE EVERYTHING THE NIGHT BEFORE

Nothing kills a deal hunt faster than a dead phone battery. Fully charge your phone, smartwatch and portable power bank the night before. If you're shopping in person, consider bringing a car charger or compact wall plug. For online shoppers, a backup charger near your workspace can keep you powered up while hopping between sites.

CLEAR YOUR DIGITAL CLUTTER

You don't want a sluggish device slowing you down when seconds count. Take time to close unused tabs, delete old apps, and update your operating system and browser. A clean and up-to-date device runs faster and that can make a difference when checkout pages start to lag.

BOOKMARK YOUR MOST WANTED ITEMS

In the days leading up to Black Friday, visit your favorite stores and bookmark product pages for items you're eyeing. Organize them into a dedicated shopping folder in your browser. This lets you

check prices quickly without searching all over again.

Many retailers offer app-only deals or early access to mobile users. Download apps for the stores you plan to shop, and log into your account ahead of time. Some apps even let you scan

barcodes in-store to check reviews or compare prices.

SET PRICE ALERTS AND NOTIFICATIONS

Sites like Honey, CamelCamelCamel, Slickdeals and Rakuten let you track item prices and send alerts when

they drop. Signing up in advance means you'll be notified as soon as your desired item hits its target price.

ENABLE AUTOFILL SAFELY

Make sure your browser or shopping app has up-to-date shipping and payment information. Autofill can shave precious seconds off checkout time and help you beat the crowds on limited-stock items. Just double-check your security settings and consider using a secure payment option like PayPal or a virtual credit card for added protection.

CREATE (OR UPDATE) YOUR ACCOUNTS

Don't wait until 5 a.m. Friday morning to remember your password. Log into your favorite stores now and make sure your account info is correct. Some deals are only available to logged-in users or loyalty members, so make sure you're registered and ready.

USE MULTIPLE DEVICES FOR MULTITASKING

If you're hunting for several deals, consider using both your phone and computer to track different sales or retailers at once. It's a smart way to stay ahead without having to juggle tabs on a single screen.

In a digital-first shopping world, a little tech prep can mean the difference between scoring a deal and missing out. With the right setup, your devices can do more than connect you, they can help you save big.



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Shopping with Kids

For many families, Black Friday shopping is more than just a quest for deals; it's part of the holiday tradition.

But bringing children along for the ride can turn even the best-laid plans into a challenge if you're not prepared.

Whether your child is eager to help or just along for the ride, these tips can help keep the day smooth, safe and even fun for the whole family.

PACK SNACKS AND WATER

Hunger and thirst can strike quickly when you're standing in long lines or navigating crowded stores. Keep a small stash of snacks on hand — think granola bars, fruit snacks, trail mix or dry cereal. A refillable water bottle for each child helps avoid expensive impulse buys at food courts or vending machines.

DRESS FOR COMFORT AND MOBILITY

Dress your child in layers so they stay comfortable whether indoors or out. Choose shoes that are practical for walking or standing, and if your child is young enough for a stroller, bring one even if they insist they won't need it. You'll be glad to have it for breaks or extra storage.



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SET EXPECTATIONS EARLY

Before leaving home, talk to your child about what the day will be like.

Let them know how long you plan to be out, what your

priorities are and what behavior you expect. Be clear about whether they'll be able to pick something out for themselves and set limits to avoid disappointment.

MAKE IT INTERACTIVE

Give kids small tasks to help them feel involved. They can carry the shopping list, help spot certain items, or check off purchases. Older kids

might enjoy keeping track of spending or helping compare prices.

BUILD IN BREAKS

Plan ahead for downtime. If the mall has a play area, take a break mid-trip to let kids run around. Even a short rest on a bench with a snack can help reset everyone's energy and mood. Bring a favorite book, toy or small game to entertain them during slower moments.

BE SAFETY SMART

In crowded spaces, it's easy for kids to wander off. For younger children, write your phone number on a slip of paper and tuck it in their pocket or have them wear a wristband with your contact info. Take a quick photo of what they're wearing before heading out, just in case.

If your child is old enough, establish a plan in case you get separated. Pick a meeting spot or make sure they know how to find store employees for help.

TIME YOUR TRIP WISELY

If possible, avoid the most crowded times of day. Mid-morning or late afternoon can be easier than the early rush. If you only need a few items, consider splitting up the trip; one adult shops while the other takes the kids to a nearby park or activity.

Bringing children along for Black Friday doesn't have to be a headache. With a little planning, it can be a shared adventure that's part of your family's holiday memories.