

A young woman with long dark hair and sunglasses on her head is smiling as she browses through a market stall. She is wearing a black vest with white floral patterns over a white top and a long, tiered beige skirt. She has a woven basket slung over her shoulder and is holding a black wallet and two colorful shopping bags (green and pink). The stall is filled with various woven wicker items, including chairs and baskets. In the background, other people and market stalls are visible, creating a lively atmosphere.

Shop Local

Arts and Crafts Markets

Warmer weather often brings out arts and crafts festivals, and it's a great place to find gifts for family and friends, or even yourself, with a local flair.

Shopping at these markets and from local artists supports a vibrant arts community in your town and fills your home with unique, one-of-a kind items.

BENEFIT FAIRS

Many arts and crafts markets support a charitable cause, such as local arts councils and arts organizations. There may be a fee to get into the market or tickets may be required; check before you go so that you're not caught unprepared.

Arts councils are an excellent way to find festivals and markets to patronize. Check community calendars and social media and talk to family and friends about where they shop. Arts and crafts markets make a great all-day adventure, and many offer food trucks, live music, and other vendors to make it fun for the whole family.

WHAT CAN YOU FIND?

Arts and crafts markets have all kinds of goods, from jewelry to food to soaps to wall decor and much, much more. It's best, if you can, to have a



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plan before you go. Know how much you can carry, how you'll carry it, and how you'll get larger items (such as furniture) home. Set a budget so you don't get carried away. While most vendors now accept cards, others may still be cash-

only, so plan accordingly.

TALK TO THE ARTISTS

These markets give people a chance to get up close and personal with the artists themselves. Take advantage of the opportunity by asking lots

of questions, but be respectful of their time and of other shoppers. If you find pieces or artists you particularly like, get the artist's contact information so you can continue to patronize them.

Larger arts and crafts

markets may attract artists and makers from around the region, not just in your particular town. Keep this in mind if you're looking for gifts with a local flavor. Ask the seller if you're not sure where something is from.

Support Local Restaurants

Sitting down to a great meal is an excellent and fulfilling way to support local businesses.

Not only are you patronizing a locally owned small business, but you're also ensuring money stays in the local community. The National Restaurant Association says that every dollar spent in a restaurant contributes \$2.68 to the national economy.

FINDING A PLACE

First, decide what kind of experience you want to have. Are you celebrating a milestone? Just want a quick burger? What kind of experience do you want to have? Ask family and friends, of course, but also look for recommendations on social media or on review sites. Even if you're on the go, consider stopping at a food truck or ordering from a fast casual place before stopping in at a drive-thru.

For an even more impactful night out, patronize a restaurant that, in turn, sources local food from farmers and ranchers. Check the menu or even call and ask which farms they get their produce and proteins from. You can ask about local bar selections, such as beers and liquors.

GIFT CERTIFICATES

Gift certificates are great ways to patronize a restaurant



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and make your family and friends happy. Buying gift certificates provides restaurants with immediate cash flow without having the expense of providing service right away. Gift certificates are great ways to recognize co-workers, surprise family and friends, and make great donations to raf-

fles and other fundraisers.

BUY PRODUCTS

Many local restaurants sell products, such as condiments, coffees and more. These make great parting gifts for visiting family and friends, especially if you enjoyed a great meal there. While you're dining, ask

the wait staff what is available for sale. Some restaurants may offer glassware, T-shirts and other merchandise.

CHAINS AREN'T ALL BAD

Remember that even if a restaurant is a chain, it's employing local people and may be owned locally by a

franchisee. If you're spending dollars at a chain restaurant, it's still spending locally, but the amount may not be as influential as it would at a completely local business. There may not be the same selection of local products as at an entirely local café or restaurant.

Finding a Salon or Spa

Most salons and spas are locally owned and spending on services or gift certificates can have a big effect.

The majority — 70% — of non-franchise salons, spas and barber shops are owner-operated, Salonspa Connection reports, meaning your purchase stays in your community.

BOOKING AN APPOINTMENT

Booking an appointment at a new salon can be a daunting experience, and a good stylist who understands your hair and your needs is worth their weight in gold. That's why the initial appointment is so important to your experience.

If you're getting color, a perm or any other complex treatment, consider booking a consultation first. You can get a good idea of the environment at the salon and the stylist's ability, and they get a better idea of your needs and your hair type.

For a spa or nail salon, your first service should be more simple, for much the same reason. Opt for an initial booking that won't leave a huge impact on you or your wallet in case you aren't satisfied.

If you have a good time, though, make sure to book a follow-up appointment for a more involved treatment later.



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ETIQUETTE

Keep in mind proper spa and salon etiquette, especially on your first appointment.

Do:

- Arrive early to allow for check-in, changing and getting a good look at the place.
- Wear appropriate clothing. For spa treatments, consider wearing loose-fitting clothing. Bring open-toed, waterproof

sandals if appropriate. Bring swimwear if the spa offers water amenities.

- Silence your phone.
- Speak softly, especially in lounges or waiting areas.
- Respect the privacy of other guests.
- Quickly and quietly communicate your comfort level, preferences or any other concerns to salon or spa staff.
- Follow instructions from

staff and respect treatment times.

- Tip appropriately. Usually, tips range from 15-20% of the cost of service.

Don't:

- Wear a lot of jewelry or perfume, especially if you're going to be changing or receiving closed-space services, such as a sauna or steam room.
- Keep medical conditions to

yourself, even if it doesn't seem like it's relevant.

- Lie about prior services, such as hair color. Not divulging a box dye or other service can cause a chemical reaction that can be damaging.
- Change your services after arriving. Each service has a particular time reserved for it and your therapist or stylist may have appointments after you.

Shopping for Services

These days, few of us have enough time to get everything done. Next time you have a gift-giving occasion, consider giving the gift of time by shopping for local services.

Births, graduations, birthdays, Mother's Day or Father's Day, house warmings, any gift-giving events are all great occasions to give a gift of time.

HOME CARE

Look for local services to help people take care of their home, inside and out. This can include yard cleaning and mowing, power washing, pool services, mobile car washes, tree services, house cleaning, pet sitting and more. If you're shopping in your own area, start by asking friends and family their favorite services to use. You can also consult social media or search recommendation websites.

PREPAY ACCOUNTS

If your intended gift recipient has a regular service they use, such as pest control or yard services, call and see if you can prepay for their next service. This takes the guesswork out of what services they find most useful and puts time and money back in their pocket. Find out what services they use by asking their recommendations for companies



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in the area.

MEALS, FOOD AND MORE

Everyone has to eat and appreciates a good meal they didn't have to cook. Look into meal deliveries from their favorite restaurants or gift certificates so they can use it

at their leisure. If you can, include money for a tip as well, especially if you're having the food delivered.

Grocery delivery is also a great idea. Choose a service such as Instacart or Uber Eats and pick out some staples or easy-to-prepare meals. Some

local grocery chains may offer delivery themselves as well. Again, make sure to tip your shopper and delivery driver.

EXPERIENCES

Delivering a great time is just a few clicks away. Consider purchasing classes or

passes to a local attraction. Memberships are also a great idea that may provide discounts on other types of purchases as well. For instance, a zoo membership may get an entire family in and provide discounts on food and gifts inside the park.



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Take a Class Locally

You're never too old to learn some new tricks.
You might find a new hobby, perfect an old one, and meet new friends at the same time.

Look for local classes at arts councils, colleges, theaters, museums, kitchen stores, groceries and more. Here are some tips for finding a class that suits you.

WHY TAKE A CLASS?

Learning a new skill can improve your professional and personal lives, help you explore new interests, hone critical thinking skills, build confidence, meet new friends and gain a new

perspective on life. While online classes are great and have their place, an in-person experience might be more beneficial, if a little uncomfortable at first.

FINDING A CLASS

Finding the right class is easier than it looks. If you're interested in the arts, start by contacting your local arts council, area museums and more. There may even be standalone art schools or maker

spaces that teach painting and other artistic pursuits. Some classes, such as those offered through a city or county or for seniors, may even be free of charge.

LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE

Learning a second language challenges your brain and may even stave off cognitive diseases such as Alzheimer's and dementia, the University of the Potomac says. It can improve your attention span and ability to focus and boost your creativity. It can pay off professionally, especially if your job frequently encounters people who primarily speak another language. You can find language classes online, at local

colleges and community centers and more. If you choose an online class, try to find local language clubs to get in-person experience speaking and flexing your new linguistic muscles.

COOKING CLASSES

Local grocery stores, kitchen stores and colleges often offer cooking classes. Most are single-day, but you may be able to find multiday courses that cover more of a variety, such as pastries or knife skills. Which you choose depends on your time commitment and what you want to learn. If you're a kitchen novice, consider taking single-day classes until you get the hang of it.

Shop at Indie Book Sellers

Shopping for books is a great way to spend an afternoon, and you can stimulate your local economy by choosing an independent bookstore rather than a large, big-box chain or online retailer.

Independent community bookstores may also feature more local tomes, support local authors and creators, and offer more diverse topics.

FINDING AN INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORE

You can find independent bookstores online with sites such as IndieBound or Bookshop.org. If there's not one near you, you can still support independent booksellers by buying online through independent shops.

WHY INDIE BOOKSTORES?

Not only are they locally owned and operated, keeping your hard-earned dollars in the community, but independent bookstores are often mainstays of the local arts community. They host book clubs, author talks, classes and other creative ways to learn and foster the arts. These bookstores also tend to support local authors,



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selling their books and promoting them.

Local bookstores also tend to know their clientele well and can recommend books particular to their shoppers' interests.

"We basically took our relationship to the community and redefined what the bookstore is," one bookseller told Harvard University for a white paper, "Reinventing Retail: The Novel Resurgence of Independent

Bookstores." "It is about the community which surrounds the bookstore and those interactions between author and reader, and readers and booksellers, and readers with each other."

THE THREAT TO INDIE BOOKSTORES

Amazon.com and other large retailers have grown in recent years, threatening the

existence of independent bookstores. Harvard University reports that bookstores run on razor-thin margins, rarely ranging past 4%. So your dollars spent in an independent bookstore not only stay in your community but also make more of an impact.

The good news is many independent bookstores have created a vibrant community dedicated to keeping them in

business. This community revolves around the curated experience of buying books at a local shop, where staff take care to match books and readers.

"If we see our products as books and what we compete on price, we lose," a bookseller told Harvard. "If we see our product as an experience, of which books are one piece, then we can compete."

Local Landscaping Favorites

Big-box stores are great for shopping for landscaping basics, but if you really want to dig into gardening, local nurseries are where it's at.

Not only do local nurseries know your climate and which plants thrive there, they may specialize in finding native plants that will bloom with little or no maintenance.

SHOPPING SEASONALLY

Local nurseries may sell wholesale or to the general public, or both. Check before visiting if the nursery is open to the public. In addition to plants in season in your area, local nurseries may also sell dirt and mulch blends that work well in your climate and for your particular plants. Their staff may also be able to help you choose fertilizers and plant foods that work well for the plants you've chosen and for your area.

In addition to plants, many local nurseries will also offer birding accessories, water feature installation and maintenance, and sometimes even expanded outdoor living selections, depending on your area. Again, the staff will be experts in what bird feeders and seeds work in your area.

WORKING WITH STAFF

Local nurseries may have staff on hand to help you



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choose plants, soils and additives to help your garden thrive. They're experts in not only gardening, but gardening in your area. If you're unsure of what you want, rely on them to make recommendations of plants that will take root on

your budget and in your time frame and level of gardening experience. Depending on what you want done, you may need to make an appointment for more intensive services than just picking up a few flats of petunias.

DESIGN SERVICES

Many local nurseries offer landscaping design if you're really stuck. A garden professional will visit your home and design a garden that meets your budget, experience and time requirements. Then, once

you approve the design, a crew will come and install the plants and teach you how to care for them. Some nurseries may even offer maintenance services on a set schedule. Talk to your local nurseries about what services are available.