Clothes Shopping

Having new things to wear is fun and exciting, and isn’t it great when someone notices? But getting the most out of the money we spend for clothing is a bit tricky these days. "There are so many places to shop! So many sales! So many choices! So many things my friends are wearing that are so-o-o expensive!"

Sound familiar?

For this project, select one of two options:
1. Create an outfit or ensemble to wear that involves at least two shopping purchases.
2. Expand a planned wardrobe scheme by making at least two purchases.

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complete two or more of the following activities:

a. Order clothing from a catalog
b. Purchase clothing from an alterations shop
c. Purchase services from an alterations shop
d. Put a garment on "layaway"
e. Take several garments to a dry cleaner
f. Adjust a garment to increase its wear
g. Write a complaint or a complimentary letter to a company
h. Help someone else make a clothing purchase
i. Find out how a consignment store operates
j. Prepare and price clothing for a rummage sale

and:

- Study a garment you wish to purchase and report on that information to at least one other person. Examples are shoes, jeans, T-shirts, or undergarments.
- Keep track of garments you purchased for several months and the care given to garments you own.
- Complete your record book.
Wardrobe planning is an important step in the shopping process. Clothing that coordinates with new garments and accessories expands a wardrobe. Knowing what is in the closet and what shape it's in can make shopping easier and can help you make good choices.

Some people feel it's good to shop early in the season for basic wardrobe needs. That's when the selection is greatest and that's important if your size is not easy to find. Certainly it is good to be there the first day, if not the first hour, of a sale and, if possible, to know in advance what merchandise will be on sale.

**Helpful Hints**

- Buy the best quality you can afford for basic garments and spend less money on extras, accessories, or fads.
- Shop with a wardrobe plan and color swatches.
- Plan ahead for special occasions.
- Comparison shop in the time you have available.
- Obtain as much information from salespersons, but refuse to be emotionally influenced by friends or salespersons.
- Check the care label so you know how much time and money you'll be spending to care for the garment.
- Check the construction and fabric for any defects, especially if you are not allowed to return the garment. Try the garment on and look at it in a three-way mirror, if possible.
- Save all sales and order receipts.
- Buy clothing that looks good on you.
- Know the stores in your area and what services they offer.

- Study catalogs and fashion magazines to forecast new trends and examine how coordinates and accessories are put together.

Many people have no idea how much they spend on clothing each year. One way to know is to keep track. On the door of your closet keep a record of items you have purchased for a number of months. Note if a particular brand of clothing, a style, or a fiber content fits, wears, or washes better.

Don't forget to save money for underwear, socks and stockings, sleepwear, etc. Underwear is an important shopping purchase. You'll want undergarments that fit and support well, and are easy to care for. (Look at that care label!) Lines, straps, or bows that show or bind are fashion problems, so consider this in your purchase.

Slips should fall about 1 inch above the bottom edge of the garment. If you have garments of several lengths you'll need several slips. Consider purchasing slips with slits to wear with skirts having back or side vents. Purchase quality garments that have fibers or finishes that prevent “static cling.”

**Kinds of Stores**

It's fun as well as smart to shop at different stores. No one type of store is the best place to shop for all clothing items. You may find several stores that have the size and style of clothing you like.

As you shop, keep in mind you are not only buying the clothing you find in the store, but also the services the store offers. Some of the services you may find are: returns, various types of charge accounts and layaways, alterations, and obtaining a garment that is out of stock or needed in another size.

Specialty shops carry limited quantities of clothing. These stores may charge more, but they often provide many personal services. Sometimes the services are reduced during sales.

Department stores offer a variety of goods in a wide range of prices. They also offer many services.

Chain stores are a group of stores under the same management in a region. There are also national chain stores. These stores have large quantities of the same item and have a fairly low mark-up in prices. Some chain stores are discount houses. Quality varies.
Factory outlets usually sell merchandise directly from a factory. Garments may be overstocked, slightly imperfect items, or “seconds.”

Clothing exchanges can be a low-cost source of clothing. Thrift stores, consignment shops, rummage sales, or garage sales are just some of these. Secondhand clothing may be a bargain if it’s clean and in good condition. But you may have to spend a lot of time shopping to find good buys.

Catalogs or mail order houses allow you to shop in your home. You will sometimes notice price differences in merchandise. Review return policies before ordering and keep a record of items ordered.

Finally, you may have a garment made for you by a seamstress. Be sure to check costs and make agreements about the work in advance.

Ordering from a Catalog
Catalogs can make shopping more convenient. You can order almost any time of the night or day, and there is a good selection of clothing to choose from. Catalogs can give you an idea of what’s available and are a source for comparing prices. Some people save major catalogs in order to reference merchandise in upcoming sale catalogs or flyers. Recent catalogs may be available in the public library if you don’t wish to receive them at home.

Catalogs have some helpful features: an index to help you find what you want, a chart of sizes, fiber and fabric descriptions, methods of care, and other clothing and design features and terms.

Notice what is said and what is not said about a garment in a catalog. Sometimes care instructions and other information are not included. The customer must know about the fiber content to find out if the garment is wrinkle prone, for example. But sometimes catalogs give useful extra information such as “the garment tends to run larger than most sizes.”

Even if you are ordering by phone, complete the order form so that you’ll have a record of your order. It is sometimes difficult to determine the exact color or fit of an item. When it arrives, handle the garment and the packaging carefully. That way, if you need to, you can send the item back right away for a refund. Sometimes a telephone call is required to approve the return, so read the order information carefully.
**Paying for Your Purchases**

You can pay for clothing in various ways: cash or check, charge card, layaway, revolving charge, and installment plan.

- A charge card allows you to pay for an item when you receive a bill for it in the mail. No interest is added if you pay in the stated time.

- Layaway allows you to purchase an item when there are plenty of garments in stock and your funds are few. You receive the item when you have made all the payments. There may be a layaway fee or down payment in some stores.

- Revolving charge allows you to use the garment before the debt is paid in full, but interest is charged, which involves extra cost.

- Using the installment plan, a down payment is subtracted and interest is figured on the remaining balance. Interest must be paid and usually no monthly statements are provided.

Some stores offer special credit programs, such as charge accounts for teenagers. You are expected to make regular payments as a charge customer. Interest may or may not be charged on the unpaid balance, depending on the policy of the store. Keep in mind that credit can add a good deal to the cost of the garment and tempt you to purchase more than you can afford.

Sometimes you can buy a similar item or one exactly the same in more than one store.

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**Purchase Examples**

Assign a number that can tell how important you believe each alternative is. Use the following number code to rank each alternative in the situations below. Then explain why you ranked each the way you did.

1—most important to consider when buying
2—important to consider when buying
3—somewhat important to consider when buying
4—slightly important to consider when buying
5—not very important to consider when buying

**Example 1:**
Eva needs a formal dress for a Christmas party. She would like to find something "sparkly" and "pretty" but at a low cost.

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**Example 2:**
Tom needs to purchase a new pair of shoes to replace a worn-out pair he wears often. Which of the following alternatives would you consider most important in deciding which pair of shoes to buy?

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Price a clothing or personal improvement item (shampoo, make-up, etc.) in three different locations.

Of course, you may want to consider some of the stores’ services before you purchase a particular item, but cost comparison can save you money. If you are seriously considering buying an item, but you want to make sure the item is still there, you can ask the store to hold it for you for several hours or overnight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item:</th>
<th>Store</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Size or Weight</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Unit Price*</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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*The unit price is the price per ounce or size. This is helpful if you are buying a product that comes in two different sizes. To figure a unit price, just divide the size into the price. For example, a bottle of lotion that has 10 ounces for $1.00 is 10 cents per ounce. Ten cents is the unit price. Compare it to a bottle that has 12 ounces for $1.80, which is 15 cents per ounce. In this case, the 10-ounce lotion is the better buy.

**Clothing Sales**

Clothing stores have sales for many reasons. Nearly all stores have certain regular sales, sometimes to move leftover merchandise at the end of a season and make room for new items. Some sales offer more real savings than others.

An understanding of the various types of sales will help you take advantage of them. Watch for announcements of sales and keep a record when each store has annual and semiannual sales so that you can plan in advance.

Shopping at sales is one way to stretch your clothing dollar, providing that:

- you remember sales items seldom can be returned
- you know when a sale is really a sale

A good buy is anything that meets your needs at a price you want to pay. If you can get what you want for less money than usual, or if you can get better quality for the same money, you have made a good buy.

But just because you saved money on purchasing an item, it is not a bargain if you cannot use it. Items in your closet that you seldom wear probably seemed like bargains when you bought them. If the garment does not fit right, is not the right color, or is of poor quality, or if you don’t have closet space for it, then your sale garment was not really a good buy after all.

Usually there’s a reason for a markdown in price. Ask these questions before you buy:

- Is it the style on the way out?
- Is it soiled, damaged, or shopworn?

- Is it irregular?
- Is the color true or faded?
- Is the construction poor?
- Is it a specific purchase by the store?
- Is it a seasonal change?
- Is it a hard-to-sell item?

**Seasonal sales:** These sales are held regularly at the end of the fashion season. Some stores stagger their seasonal sales starting with a smaller deduction one week, more of a deduction the next week, and a final deduction the last week. Other stores set up a series of sales days or even hours using this formula.

**Clearance sales:** Similar to seasonal sales, these sales get rid of old fashions and make way for new ones. Items may be shopworn. Color selection, styles, and sizes are limited.

**Special purchase sales:** Products are brought in specially for sale. These sales occur at odd times. Items may not be of the usual quality carried by the store, so it is difficult to get an idea of their value.

**Anniversary sales:** These are annual sales in honor of the store, with some regular stock and some specially purchased stock. Get to know the store’s merchandise in order to save at an anniversary sale.

**Stimulation sales:** Used to promote the store during slow periods, these sales are known under names such as “back-to-school” or “sidewalk sales.”
Advertising
What costs $50,000 or more, lasts 30 seconds, and reaches thousands of people at a time? Yes, it's a television commercial.

Thirty-three billion dollars are spent on advertising in the United States each year. That's about $155 spent on each person in the country. On the average, every American consumer is bombarded with close to 1,000 advertising messages each day. Advertisements aren't just on television, though—they're on TV and radio, in buses, in flyers, at the movies, on billboards, and even on items that we've purchased, like magazines, newspapers, and books.

Become aware of advertising for clothing and personal appearance products. Collect advertisements that appeal to you. Videotape clothing advertisements on a camcorder or watch one of the cable television clothing shows for an hour. Write down the claims made about each product and, if a customer is interviewed, find out why he or she bought a particular product. Which ads grab your attention?

Share your observations with members of your club and other friends. Write a script for an ad and act it out in your club.

How to Make a Formal Complaint
What would you do if a ready-made garment didn't live up to claims about its performance? Throw it away, try to mend it? Return it to the store where you bought it?

Manufacturers won't know about problems with their product unless customers speak up. So next time you aren't satisfied with a purchase, here's what to do:

First, decide if you have a valid complaint. Did you abuse the garment in any way? You can't expect good performance if you didn't follow the care instructions or if you treated the garment carelessly. Some consumers pressure a merchant to make an adjustment or level criticism at a store when they really do not have cause for such action. But if you feel you have a legitimate complaint, you're ready to inform the store.

Return the item to the business as soon as possible. Present the sales receipt. Talk to the salesperson with whom you did business if possible. If the store has a complaint department, go there. If you don't get a satisfactory adjustment, ask to see the manager. Usually businesses with a reputation for dealing fairly with their customers will make a fair adjustment of complaints, partly because they want to protect their image and partly because they feel it's their responsibility.

If you can't make the complaint in person, write a letter clearly stating your complaint. A letter makes your complaint a matter of record. If possible, type your letter and keep a copy for yourself. Attach a copy of the receipt.
A telephone call, on the other hand, is easy to ignore, but it may be fine for a simple problem. If you must phone, keep your cool no matter how angry you are. If you are angry, you will forget to give key facts. Ask the name of the person you are dealing with—it’s easier to deal with someone when you know his or her name. This way if you have to make several calls or contacts you know who will know about your situation.

If possible, take the garment and the sales receipt with you when you make a complaint. Be sure to tell the sales clerk all the information about it:
- when you purchased it
- price when you purchased it
- how long you’ve had it
- number of times you’ve worn it
- care given the garment
- what’s wrong with the garment
- other information that will help the person understand your complaint

Keep sales slips, price tags, and care instructions. If you complain in person, take along these records and copies of any letters you may have already written about the garment. You may want to bring extra copies of the letters to the store to give the clerk, but don’t give away the originals.

Be polite! Sarcastic or abusive letters and phone calls are easily ignored by the complaint manager. Handled well and in good humor, your complaint will stand out and you’ll receive attention more quickly. When customers are honest and friendly, retailers will usually bend over backwards to make an adjustment.

**Zippers:** Zippers should be smooth and flat, securely stitched, and of appropriate type, weight, length, strength, and color for the garment.

**Buttons:** Attractive buttons enhance the quality and look of any garment. Buttons should be firmly attached, properly placed, and suit the size and type of garment. Check to see if you can button and unbutton them easily.

**Buttonholes:** These should look neat and clean with no raw edges showing. They should be made with stitches that are close together and go deep into the surrounding fabric. Loosely sewn buttonholes will pull out and allow the fabric to ravel.

**Hems:** Hems should not show on the outside of the garment. They should be even in width and parallel to the floor. Hems need to be flat and smooth, but not appear overpressed.

**Interfacing:** Interfacing is used in the collar, labels, cuffs, neckline, and sleeves facing. It keeps the fabric from stretching out of shape and gives “body” to that particular area of the garment. Interfacing should not roll or twist.

If you choose to buy a garment of lesser quality, there are things you can do to improve its wear and appearance. You can stitch stabilizers in shoulder seams and other areas of stretch. You can stitch the garment twice under the arms, in the crotch area, or other area that receives a lot of strain. You can sew on the buttons again, purchase new ones, or use button covers.

Before you purchase a garment that has flaws, price the cost of the alterations or the time and expense of doing them yourself.
Select a garment and calculate the cost of purchasing it according to different types of credit plans.

Type of garment

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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Initial Cost</th>
<th>Cost with Credit</th>
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<td>Regular charge</td>
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<td>Layaway</td>
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<td>Revolving charge</td>
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<td>Installment plan</td>
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Look in recent newspapers and find five stores that advertise clothing sales. Check the advertisements and fill in the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Store</th>
<th>Type of Sale</th>
<th>Savings Advertised</th>
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Recall a recent ready-to-wear purchase that proved unsatisfactory. Did you return it to the store where you bought it? Describe how you asked for a refund or exchange.


Project story

Tell what you learned in this project. Were you better able to buy clothing for your wardrobe? Were you able to save money? What experiences did you have finding garments or accessories that fit? Talk about the project you researched. How did others feel about your project? Did you create a shopping aid to help you? Add other information that you want to share or to keep for the future.


Clothes Shopping Project Record

Name ____________________________________________

Address __________________________________________

Age as of January 1 _____________

Club _____________________________________________

Number of years in this project _______________________

Number of years in Textile Science projects ___________

Leader’s signature __________________________________

Ready-to-wear garments and accessories selected as part of your project this year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ITEM/GARMENT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>COMPARISONS MADE</th>
<th>PRICE TO MAKE</th>
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Attach a picture or drawing of ensemble.

Attach a list of other clothing purchases you have made this year.

Care of clothing

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF WORK DONE (PRESSING, STAIN REMOVAL, HAND WASHING, ETC.)</th>
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Name stores in your area that match these descriptions:

Men and boys wear _______________________________________

Women and girls apparel ___________________________________

Shoe stores _______________________________________________

Catalogs you receive _______________________________________

Discount stores ___________________________________________

Factory outlet stores _______________________________________

4-H Textile Science

Creative Project
Sharing What You've Learned
Share something you have learned in this project.
Demonstrate how to:
- Order from a catalog
- Use an alteration shop
- Figure alterations costs
- Lay away a garment
- Write a complaint or complimentary letter to a company
- Sell by consignment
- Price clothing for a garage sale

- Use a lint brush
- Select the best hanger for your garment

Or discuss:
- Types of clothing stores
- Ways of paying for clothing
- Layaway options
- The cost of credit
- Some aspect of sales
- Advertising: how to read between the lines
- What to look for in good-quality clothing

Want to Know More?
Resource ideas for this project can be found on PENpages. Ask about PENpages at your county extension office. Read about wardrobe planning and care in the Wardrobe Planning and Closet Connections projects.

Exhibits and Fashion Revue
Check current fair and roundup listings for exhibit ideas. Check fashion revue rules and entry information. Some revues may be open only to those who have sewn their garments. If so, why not organize a revue for a club meeting or for the public.

Taking the Project Again
If you have enjoyed this project, consider taking it again! Just select different activities and exhibits.

Name         Kelly Torc
Age          15
4-H club     Socks and ties
County       Snippet

Prepared by Jan Scholl, assistant professor of agricultural and extension education.


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