

from Consumer
Reports...

Use Tools for Digital Deals

1. Get the lowest current price. Invisible-Hand is a browser extension (download it from its website) that tracks prices at 11,000 online stores and sends you a pop-up notification so that you can see whether an item you're viewing is cheaper elsewhere. It works in the background of your browser (it's compatible with Chrome, Firefox, and Safari, and does not collect any personally identifiable information about you). Click on the pop-up, and you'll be directed to the

product page of the competing website.

2. Automate the coupon

search. Forget about Googling coupon codes. The browser extension Honey finds and automatically enters them for you at checkout when you're shopping at one of thousands of participating stores. At checkout, you'll see a pop-up box asking whether you'd like to try all available codes. Click "yes" and Honey will run through them in a matter of seconds. The app collects data necessary to save you money but doesn't sell it.

3. Give yourself a gift

(card). Buy gift cards below face value at sites like Raise or CardCash and use them to

purchase gifts for others. The sites list cards, either unused or with remaining funds, from consumers that can be purchased at a discount. The discounts vary. In December, gift cards for Best Buy can average 3 percent off and 20 percent off for Ann Taylor.

4. Get rewards for shopping. Use a shopping portal like Shopkick or Ebates to earn rewards (on top of loyalty rewards and credit card points). Create an account on one of the sites, then click through to participating retailers (rather than going directly to their home page) to earn rewards for purchases made on those sites.

5. Get friendly over IM. If you're shopping at a retailer

that has an online instant chat service, use it to ask for a lower price. Say something about how much you like the product but that it's just a little pricey for you. Ask whether there are any promotions or discounts that might make it more affordable.

7. Be a follower. Follow your favorite retailers on Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks, and sign up for their email and text alerts about flash deals and exclusive discounts. Nordstrom, for example, was recently promoting its Anniversary Sale via Facebook, and Lord & Taylor frequently sends discount codes via text to consumers who opt in to them. Yes, this means those platforms—and their marketing

partners—may be better able to target you with promotions. Want to reduce this kind of online tracking?

8. Download the app. Some retailers have additional deals only for mobile customers. Turn on the app's notifications to get them. The Kohl's app, for example, offers notifications of discounts and allows users to track and redeem their rewards.

9. Pretend you're a newbie. Log in with a secondary email address, which might fool a site into thinking you're a first-time visitor. This may entitle you to discounts offered only to new customers.

10. Follow the leaks. Some of the largest retailers strategically share their Black

Friday circulars to places like **BFAds.net**, which posts them for consumers. And we also break news about Black Friday deals right here on CR.org. If you see early word of a sale on something you plan to buy, up the odds you'll get it before it sells out by putting the item in your cart on the retailer's site before the big sale day—and setting a reminder to finish the purchase once the sale starts.