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Friday, August 25, 2006

**Kara G. Morrison: Back to School: Shopping**

## Do the math: 10 smart buys

### Where to find best bargains on clothes and supplies



Time is running out to check off the back-to-school shopping list.

The good news for procrastinators is that bargains abound. Many stores are using basic school supplies as loss leaders, selling them below cost to draw customers. And tons of back-to-school merchandise is already hitting clearance racks and bins.

Add to that the fact that cheap chic is in, even for discriminating teens. Former label snobs are adopting the "look for less" notion of creating high-fashion outfits on a budget. So, here are 10 of the best deals -- everything from cool T-shirts to cheap crayons.

**1. Book bags.** OfficeMax has a surprising selection of backpacks, including practical wheeled types in fun color combos. The lightweight Extreme Access Rolling Backpack

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comes in royal blue/lime, fuchsia/pink and black and blue/gray for \$14.99 through Saturday. While you're there, check out the nifty no-icepacks-needed Zero Degrees lunch bags for \$5.99. Just refrigerate the bag before you fill it, and Junior's lunch will stay chilled. Visit OfficeMax.com for store locations.

Another store with an overwhelming supply of affordable backpacks is Forman Mills -- the discount chain with two mega stores in Detroit and one in Highland Park. At the later, we found hundreds of name-brand backpacks ranging from \$6.99 to \$29.99, with most well under \$20. A few adorable Hello Kitty designs were just \$14.99. Visit Formanmills.com for store locations.

**2.Notebooks.** Target is selling 10-packs of spiral notebooks in a variety of colors for just \$1 -- that's 10 cents per 70-page spiral notebook. This deal is good while supplies last, which won't be long. Other places to find good prices on paper include InkStop stores in Troy, Shelby Township and Auburn Hills, where 70-page Mead spiral notebooks are 9 cents each (limit 5) through Saturday. Rite Aid stores are selling four 70-page spiral or 60-page wireless notebooks for \$1. Visit Target.com, Inkstop.net or RiteAid.com for store locations.

**3.Classroom supplies.** It's fairly easy to find good deals on school standards such as glue, folders and tape. OfficeMax is selling 12-packs of pencils or 150-sheet packets of filler paper for just 10 cents each through Saturday. And Target has Elmer's glue bottles and glue stick packs at 5 for \$1.

Just remember to pay attention to small supply



Wayne E. Smith / The Detroit News

**Rolling backpack, \$14.99, and orange lunch tote, \$5.99, at OfficeMax. Crayons, 20-pack box of pencils and scissors, \$1 each at Dollar Tree. Pack of 10 spiral notebooks, \$1 at Target.**

## School stylin'

Still not sure about fashion dos and don'ts for the '06/'07 school year? Choose a letter of this fashion alphabet soup and score A's in Trends 101:

- A** is for argyle
- B** is for slouch boots
- C** is for camouflage
- D** is for denim
- E** is for embellished jeans
- F** is for ballet flats
- G** is for gold & metallic touches
- H** is for hoodies
- I** is for iPod
- J** is for jumper dresses

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purchases. If you're paying more than \$1 for basic calculators, scissors, etc., make a quick trip to Dollar Tree. The store not only stocks basics such as 64-count crayons for a buck, but it sells some surprisingly cute folder sets and memo pads. And yes, everything is \$1. Find stores at [www.dollartree.com](http://www.dollartree.com).

**4.Cargo pants** . Steve & Barry's, known primarily for college logo apparel, has a huge selection of back-to-school clothes for every age. The amazing thing is this: Nearly everything costs \$6.98 or less. That means cargo pants for guys and gals -- in tan, khaki, brown and even camouflage -- are just \$6.98; \$5.98 for kids.

Men's and women's jeans are also \$6.98, as are slacks, college logo T-shirts, sweatshirts and pullovers, winter coats and even shoes! Polos for men and women are \$5.98 to \$6.98.

"Starbury" tennis shoes, designed by point guard for the New York Nicks Stephon Marbury, are the most expensive item in the store at \$14.98. Stores are located on Michigan and Michigan State campuses and at Great Lakes Crossing in Auburn Hills, Fairlane Town Center in Dearborn and Lakeside Mall in Sterling Heights.

**5.T-shirts** . Right now, JCPenney has a fun selection of graphic T-shirts for girls and guys, most on sale for about \$10. Designs include the popular skull-and-bones motif, tattoo-look screenprints and even lace details. The gals' shirts are long -- a big trend for the season that works with belts and layering. The other great place for extra-long tees is Pitaya, 211 S. Main St. in Royal Oak. Its stretchy cotton shirts come in dozens of colors and in crew, scoop

**K** is for knits  
**L** is for leggings  
**M** is for military  
**N** is for chunky necklaces  
**O** is for oversized tops & bags  
**P** is for pendants  
**Q** is for quilted jackets  
**R** is for rugby  
**S** is for skinny jeans  
**T** is for tunics  
**U** is for utility and cargo pants  
**V** is for vests  
**W** is for wide belts  
**X** is for xtreme fits  
**Y** is for western yoke details  
**Z** is for novelty zippers

*Suzanne Brown and Sheba R. Wheeler / Denver Post*

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and V-neck styles for just \$12.

**6.Accessories.** Don't pay too much for accessories that may be out of style in a snap. H&M (the Swedish fashion retailer) is often just ahead of the trends and offers great prices on accessories such as hats, jewelry and purses. And don't count them out for basics, such as tailored blazers for \$34.90 and basic dresses for \$19.90. There are stores at Briarwood Mall in Ann Arbor and Lakeside Mall in Sterling Heights. Another will open at Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi on Aug. 31.

**7.Polos and tanks.** Old Navy stores are great for basics, including the long, ribbed tank tops that fit perfectly under the season's tunics and long sweaters. They're just \$7.50 for two and come in tons of colors. Old Navy polos -- an essential for schools that required collared shirts -- are also a great deal. Men's classic and women's stretch polos are \$12 each for two or more. Kids' polos are \$7.50 to \$9.50 each.

**8.Jeans.** For good prices on denim, try T.J. Maxx and Marshall's. The discount retailers sell denim labels such as Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren Polo and Hot Kiss for about \$13 to \$30. Forman Mills is also filled with good deals on denim, from basic men's Levi's 505 jeans for \$14.99 to women's l.e.i. and Bongo brands for \$12.99. Another good bet is Kmart, where Route 66, Thalia Sodi, Wrangler's and Levi's (all \$16.99 to \$26.99) are buy one and get an additional pair for half-off through Saturday.

**9.USB drives.** OK, parents, this is the equivalent of floppy discs or notebooks for our generation. With more and more schools requiring students to have computers, the tiny



Wayne E. Smith / The Detroit News

Hat, \$6.90; necklace, \$9.90; wrap dress, \$19.90; and fashion ring, \$5.90 at H&M.

[See full image](#)

gadgets are a necessity for storing term papers and other homework. Through Saturday, OfficeMax stores are selling 1-gigabyte Sandisk Cruzer USB Drives for \$25.99 -- that's a savings of \$35.

**10. Dorm stuff.** All student lounge dorm decor at Kohl's is at least half-off. You'll find cool accessories, such as the rotating globe lamp (regularly \$39.99) for \$19.99, and organizers such as the three-drawer storage cube for \$12.99 (save \$22). Ikea is another good bet for adding fun to your dorm without spending big bucks. Start with cushion covers, such as the funky Bettan design in blue and green for \$9.99, or the red and purple velvet Andrea covers for \$14.99.

#### **Cool stuff**

Are your kids still not too keen on heading back to school? Up their anticipation by reminding them of the cool things about heading back to school, including:

- New socks. New underwear. Feels so good!
- New lunchbox.
- Welcome-back posters made by the student council.
- Rows and rows of perfect, isosceles triangle tips in a 64-count box of Crayolas, looking like a horizonful of mountains in every color on Earth.
- Perfectly square, perfectly pink eraser on the tip of a new No. 2.
- Getting a teacher with a funny last name -- paging Mr. Heiny!
- Cafeteria rolls: The very definition of delicious!
- The possibility of being assigned a seat near your friend.



Wayne E. Smith / The Detroit News

T-shirt, \$10 at JCPenney. [See full image](#)

### *Cox News Service*

#### **Find bargains**

- Set a spending budget.
- Challenge your kids to a savvy shopping competition. Give them a set amount for a back-to-school outfit, then judge their purchases in a "fashion show" with smartest shopper earning a small prize.
- Don't shop without a list. Knowing what you need cuts down on superfluous purchases.
- Research prices online before you buy.
- Research advertised sales in your newspaper and advertising circulars before shopping.
- Consider a trip to an outlet mall, especially if your child insists on certain fashion labels.
- To really stretch your dollars, explore resale shops such as Plato's Closet ( [www.platocloset.com](http://www.platocloset.com)) in Canton, Novi and Madison Heights. The franchise sells current styles of brand name clothing, shoes and accessories. Teens can also make money selling their gently used clothing to the store.

*Kara G Morrison*

*The Detroit News*

#### **Online price check**

Search for back-to-school deals on these discount Web sites. The price comparisons will help you set and stick to a spending budget.

- **Abebooks.com.** This collaboration of independent booksellers advertises a sale on classroom textbooks.
- **Shoplocal.com.** Search for specific items and compare advertised sales at area retail stores using their search engine.
- **Gap.com.** Shop for denim and popular school



Wayne E. Smith / The Detroit News

**Cargo pants, \$5.98 for kids; \$6.98 for men and women at Steve & Barry's.**

[See full image](#)

fashions.

- **JCPenney.com.** Shop for school clothing to dorm decor.
- **Kmart.com.** Shop for school supplies, clothes and more.
- **Kohls.com.** Find school clothes, accessories and dorm doodads.
- **OldNavy.com.** Find school clothes and accessories for all ages.
- **OfficeMax.com.** Find backpacks and school supplies.
- **Overstock.com.** This online store sells everything from dorm necessities to school clothes and shoes.
- **SmartBargains.com.** This Web site for Loehmann's discount stores sells designer clothes, shoes and accessories.
- **Target.com.** Find school supplies, clothing, dorm decor and more.
- **Walmart.com.** Find school supplies, clothing, dorm decor and more.
- **Zappos.com.** Shop for and compare prices on name brand shoes.

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Long, ribbed tanks, \$7.50 for two at Old Navy. [See full image](#)

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The Gap

On the left, logo hat, \$9.50; long-sleeved thermal varsity T-shirt, \$19.50; rugby Capri pants, \$34.50. At right, short-sleeved rugby polo, \$12.50; butterfly embroidered jeans, \$39.50, from The Gap. [See full image](#)

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