

Top 10 things you should buy used

Published January 30, 2008

Buying used isn't for everyone, and that's terrific news. That means there's more for the rest of us.

The prices on just about everything are out of control, so more and more people are practicing frugality to beat the high cost of living. While some people will continue to buy things new, many admit they wish they hadn't wasted the money.

Let's consider everything you've bought brand shiny new in the past year. How much do you think you could have comfortably bought used? I'll share my Top 10 list of everyday items you can buy used, so you can save hundreds of dollars this year.

Not only that - they often have enough usable life for you to pass them on, too. Think price and planet.

TOYS AND GAMES: Wash used toys, and they're as good as new. Many kids quickly grow tired of toys, so there's never a shortage of them available used or free. Preowned video games are sold at a considerable discount. You can trade back your old games, too. Consider just bikes and outdoor play equipment, and the savings add up quickly.

BABY ITEMS: Babies grow fast, so clothing and gear can be found cheaply secondhand. If you're buying gear, check for recalls at <http://www.cpsc.gov/> and <http://www.recalls.gov/>. Let people know you're open to hand-me-downs, too. What you save can go straight to the baby's college fund.

CARS: Let someone else eat the depreciation. To avoid problems, research before buying. Know the value of the car, and get a mechanic's inspection and opinion. Check the car's history at Auto Check (www.autocheck.com).

MUSIC AND MOVIES: Cassettes, CDs, DVDs and instruments are often sold after the owner has lost interest. It's difficult to know whether a child will maintain interest in an instrument, so buying used is a practical decision. Used instruments can be donated at places such as Charity Music Inc. (www.charitymusic.org/websiteindex.html). Instruments are loaned at no charge to disadvantaged children.

HOUSEWARES: Even professional designers look for secondhand accessories. You can find great deals for your home on items such as appliances, tableware, linens and framed art, to name a few - all for a

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fraction of the cost.

FORMAL DRESSES: It's become fashionable to wear used vintage formal gowns. Teens attending the prom have a chance to wear a unique dress that was probably worn only once by someone else. Consider paying it forward after the prom by donating it. The Glass Slipper Project (www.glassslipperproject.org/yostate.htm) has a listing of programs that accept them. Help make the prom special for someone else.

FURNITURE: Consider floor models to get deep discounts. Antique furniture is interesting and unusual. For next to nothing, you can find quality used furniture that needs only upholstery or a little sanding or paint. Furnishing an office can be expensive, but with liquidations, closeouts and plenty of resellers, it doesn't make sense to buy new.

CRAFT SUPPLIES: Whether it's small items like yarn or big items like a kiln, craft hobbies don't have to be hard on your wallet. Have craft supplies collecting dust? Consider joining a craft swap. Swap-bot (<http://www.swap-bot.com/>) has swap listings and helps organize swaps.

BOOKS: Textbooks are expensive, so buying used cuts costs. Places such as Abe Books (<http://www.abebooks.com/>) can help you find titles for less. Between libraries, used bookstores, garage sales and thrift stores, books can be found cheap or free. You can buy books or donate to help support literacy at Better World Books (www.betterworldbooks.com).

Consider swapping books you're done reading and pick up some you want to read by visiting Paperback swap (<http://www.paperbackswap.com/>). Before throwing books away, consider donating them to organizations such as Books for Soldiers (<http://www.booksforsoldiers.com/>) and Books for the Barrios (<http://www.booksforthebarrios.com/>).

HOUSES: Many older homes are better constructed and have more character than their newer counterparts. In many areas, they are on larger lots, on a street where all the homes are architecturally different and with mature landscaping, too. Often, buyers can get more features for their money in an older home than by building new.

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