

BACK TO SCHOOL SHOPPING SAVINGS TIPS

When the calendar flips to August, back-to-school shopping is right around the corner. You could end up spending hundreds of dollars—maybe even more—per child each year. If you're a parent and you're worried your bank account won't be able to take the financial hit, here are a few tips to help save you money this time of year:

Take inventory and shop secondhand

Chances are good your kids didn't use every one of their school supplies from last year. Take a day to figure out what they truly need versus what they'd like to have. Clean out their closets to find unused erasers, pencils, folders, or even backpacks that can be reused.

Involve the kids in creating the budget

Now that you know what your children really need for school this year, sit down and make a budget. Involve them in this process and have them help you itemize out how much to spend on various items.

Ask for a supply list

Many schools will offer parents a list of recommended school supplies. If yours doesn't, call the school's front office or get in touch with a teacher and ask for one. Look through the list to see what you already have that you can cross off—getting rid of wasteful spending.

Shop after school starts

Beat the August crowds by having your kids use what they already have for the first week or two of school. By Labor Day, they'll know what kind of clothes are in style this year, and they should also know what supplies they really need for each class.

Use adult office supplies

Binders and notebooks made for children are often decorated and far more expensive than the adult equivalents. This year, forgo the youthful versions and plan a craft day to allow your kids to transform adult school supplies with markers and stickers.

Look for bargains

Your favorite big box store will likely have more favorable prices on everyday supplies than the little shops, especially when you buy in bulk. Another idea is to consider buying in bulk online, especially if they come with free shipping. Dollar stores also often have comparable school supplies cheaper than other retail outlets.

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