



**BLACK**  
Friday

# Be Prepared

Black Friday can be one of the most fun, exciting and productive shopping days of the year.

However, to make the most of the day, be well prepared. This isn't your typical shopping day and if you're going to make a marathon of it, you'll want to make sure you are ready.

## DO YOUR RESEARCH

Not all deals are good buys. Start your research weeks or months ahead of time. Set price alerts for items you know you want and watch to see what they are and whether they are going up before being slashed.

Follow your favorite retailers — especially local businesses — on social media. Make a list of retailers on Twitter and start checking them for sales announcements. Follow Facebook pages, which will also start to give you targeted ads.

Sign up for newsletters and emails from your favorite retailers. Consider creating a special email account just for these so they don't overcrowd your personal account.

## GATHER WHAT YOU NEED

Make a trip to the bank or the ATM and get some cash. You want to make sure you have a little for incidental expenses and small purchases, but you don't want to carry



a lot either lest it be lost or stolen.

Make sure your car is filled with gas before Friday. You may be able to do this on Wednesday or after you do any Thanksgiving Day traveling.

Make a list of your credit cards and the numbers to call if they are stolen. Put that list in the glove box of your car.

Pull out three envelopes for your wallet or purse. In one,

put all your coupons in the order of the stores you plan to visit. On the second one, write receipts and, when shopping, put all your receipts in it. On the third, write rebates and keep it for all rebate information and receipts.

## SET YOUR BUDGET

Figure out how much you have to spend. Review your list and determine how much

you can spend on any one item or any one person. Stick with it. Remember, Cyber Monday is around the corner and if you can't get something for the right price on Black Friday, you have more opportunities in the days to come.

## CHECK PRICES AND DEALS

Look through the ads before you go. The Thanksgiving Day

newspaper is one of the best purchases you can make. For any item that you want, compare prices at different stores. Take notes of such things as limited items or sales that are available only at a certain time. Schedule your shopping around those times.

Finally, set your alarm so you can hit those early sales and make sure you get enough sleep for the long day ahead of you.



# Let Your Phone Guide You

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Type Black Friday into the search function of your phone's app store and you'll get a plethora of results offering to help you find deals on the biggest shopping day of the year.

These are all apps that can help you get some of the best deals for Black Friday as well as stay organized and on target.

Different apps can help you track prices, find deals, access coupons, calculate prices and find parking. Most of the apps are good not just for Black Friday, but for year-round shopping.

## SHOPPING COMMUNITIES

Some apps, such as Slickdeals, provides a platform for deal hunters who share information. Members find, post and share such things as deals, coupons, discounts and promo codes, with all of

the deals vetted through a voting system and the promo codes and coupons being verified by a coupons team. You can set alerts for deals on specific products and save your favorite stores. According to their app, they have saved online shoppers more than \$6.8 billion in the past 20 years.

## BARCODE SCANNERS

It can be frustrating to find that perfect item only to discover there is no price tag on it. It's why a barcode and QR code reader is an essential app for your phone. Scan the barcode on the product and most apps will provide you with the

price. Some will even then run a price comparison and let you know what that item costs at other nearby stores.

## DISCOUNTS

If you're looking for local discounts, Groupon can be a great way to shop local. It is a site that partners with local businesses and provides deals to their users. According to their website, it has pumped \$25 billion into local businesses and saved North American shoppers \$35 billion as of March 2021.

## DISCOUNT CALCULATOR

It's hard to know exactly what you're going to pay on a sales item once you've figured in the advertised percentage off and sales tax. It's why apps like Discount Calculator Pro can keep you on budget. The app allows you to input prices, discounts and taxes (it comes with a U.S. sales tax reference guide) to figure out

what you will actually pay.

## PARKING

SpotHero is an app that can do great work for you on a busy shopping day when a parking spot can seem a bigger score than the latest electronics deal. You can type in your destination or use find nearby to find a spot. You can designate the times you are looking for and it will search for an open space. Many times you can pay for the parking through SpotHero.

## LOCATION SHARING

Some of the apps you use on Black Friday will ask for your location. It's a good time to opt-in on this, even if you turn it off later. By sharing your location, you let the apps provide you with exclusive discounts, cashback offers and personalized deals right as you arrive at the store.

# Map Out a Route in Advance

With so many sales and so many shopping possibilities, creating a route before you go can keep you organized and help you hit all the places that you want to go.

## MAKE A LIST

Start with a list. Write the stores you want to go to, the sale times and when each of the stores open. Organize the stores in the order that you want to visit them.

Your schedule might look something like:

- **Big sales first:** Get them in the early hours before they run out of items.
- **Local stores:** Pick a downtown area or several different ones and take in local holiday events as well.
- **Craft shows:** Art and craft shows are a great way to get unique, handmade gifts from local creators and many towns have them running both Friday and Saturday. Some specifically don't open until Friday afternoon so as not to compete with the other shopping events.

## FIGURE OUT ADDRESSES AND LOCATIONS

Look up the locations and addresses of the stores you plan to go to, especially if they have more than one location or you haven't visited their store before. Addresses with ZIP codes are especially important

if you plan to enter them into a GPS. While you may need to do a little back and forth based on sale times, you'll be more efficient if you are able to group stores close to each other in your travel plans.

## CHOOSE A MAP TYPE

Once you've figured out which stores you want to visit when, create a plan for finding them. You can save a list on your phone to put into your GPS or you can use map-mak-

ing programs to create something more formal.

Programs such as Mapline let you copy and paste an Excel list of addresses and it will make a map for you of everywhere you want to go.

Or be old-fashioned and print a map and use a highlighter to mark your route.

## GOOGLE MAPS

In 2021, Google Maps announced new features just in time for Black Friday and,

by this year, they'll have all the kinks worked out. Use the Area Busyness to find out how crowded an area is. It may help you decide to reroute your plan if a store is too busy or unexpectedly uncrowded.

They also announced on their blog that they were expanding the directory tab for places like malls and parking lots. You can now see what types of stores are in a building as well as see when a store is open, its rating and what

floor it is on.

## STORE MAPS

One final route-planning tool are store maps. Some businesses, especially around Black Friday, will put maps of the insides of their stores online. You can quickly find what area of the store you need to visit to get what is on your list.

With all these tools in place, you'll be prepared to find everything you are looking for.



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# Stay Safe In Parking Lots

Black Friday shopping should be a festive event, not a dangerous one.

The National Safety Council reports that tens of thousands of crashes happen in parking lots and parking garage structures each year with hundreds of people dying. The worst day according to auto insurers? Black Friday. Claims spike on that day and run high for the rest of the season. And those are just reported accidents.

Take extra precautions in parking lots, both when driving and when walking through them.

## SAFETY TIPS FOR DRIVERS

AAA, in its “Parking Lot Survival Guide,” and the NSC, in collaboration with the Oswego, Illinois, Police Department make the following recommendations:

- Stay in the lanes and go the right direction. Don’t cut across the lot.
- Drive slowly and use your turn signal.
- Obey all signs.
- Watch for small children and parents with strollers.
- Don’t stop suddenly so that you get rear-ended.
- Focus on driving and don’t get distracted with phone calls, emails, personal grooming or even finding a great spot.
- Back into spots as it is more dangerous to back out of them.
- Wear your seat belt.



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- Park near the side door of a store rather than the main entrance. It might be less crowded.

- Park further from the store where there is lighter traffic and you’re less likely to get in an accident with another vehicle.

- Use your headlights, especially in parking garages.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy’s Fermi Research Alliance, the two best places to park are at the end of the row next to an island and in front of a light pole. An island can protect your car from

dings, scratches and dents. Do not, though, park at the end of a row if there isn’t an island because your car is more vulnerable to turning traffic. A light pole serves two purposes. One, it protects you from someone who might pull too far forward and hit your car. Two, it provides extra security at night.

## SAFETY TIPS FOR PEDESTRIANS

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 80% of pedestrian traffic fatalities take place when it is dark. Make sure you

can be seen. Walk in well-lit areas and wear bright clothing. Make eye contact with the driver of a car if you are going to cross in front of it.

As tempting as it is to pull out the cellphone as soon as you stop driving, don’t. Keep your cellphone away while walking through a parking lot. Don’t start digging through your purse. Stay alert and keep any distractions at bay.

Pick safe places to walk. If a parking lot has crosswalks, use them. Walk facing traffic in one-way rows. Don’t dart between parked cars. Watch for

brake lights so you know if a car is backing up.

## DETER THEFT

Consumer Reports recommends picking parking spots that are well-lit. They also tell you to make sure you lock your doors and keep purchases out of sight, either by locking them in a trunk or covering them under dark-colored blankets.

The Urban Justice Policy Center recommends picking parking lots where there is video surveillance equipment and pedestrian traffic is restricted.

# Plan a Shopping Outfit

Shopping on Black Friday is a day-long event that can start in the early hours of the morning and continue until late at night.

For some shoppers, it means camping out the night before in long lines to make sure they are the first in the store to grab limited-item deals.

All this means that die-hard shoppers have to put a little more care into what they wear than they would for a run out to the grocery store any other day of the year.

## DRESSING FOR WEATHER

First, Black Friday falls in late November and for many parts of the country, that means it can be cold or that weather can be unpredictable. Some years it might be short-sleeve weather, other years there might be snow.

If it's cold, it likely means that you'll be going back and forth from the cold outdoors to the heated indoors.

Most people don't want to have to take a heavy coat on and off with every store they enter, especially as more malls close and shopping involves travel between individual stores.

Find a happy medium. Wear a light jacket or a fleece coat. If it's a rainy day, or rain is even a possibility, wear a



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rain coat or pack a poncho.

Dress in layers that you can shed throughout the day as the weather changes.

## DRESS FOR COMFORT

This is not the day to show off your fancy heels or break in a new pair of boots. Wear comfortable shoes such as sneakers or flat loafers with

plenty of support. Pick shoes that will keep your feet dry if you are shopping in wet climates.

Wear clothes with pockets that you will be comfortable wearing all day. You need plenty of room to move and while you don't necessarily have to wear work-out clothes, they aren't a bad idea.

## DRESS FOR SAFETY

Think about how you want to carry your money. Will you wear a fanny pack? Carry a purse? Use an oversized wallet that can hold your coupons and anything you might need throughout the day?

Remember that you will be in crowds and you don't want to carry something that can be

easily snatched.

A cross-body purse lets you have free hands for shopping and won't get lost because you won't have to set it down.

And remember, if you get part-way through the day and find out what you are wearing doesn't work? It's a great day to buy something new and change into it right away.

# Plan Meals for the Day

It may not seem like meal planning is necessary on Black Friday or that after stuffing yourself on Thanksgiving you even want to think about food again.

If you don't, however, you may find yourself making impulsive decisions when hunger sets in only to suffer from sugar or energy crashes afterward.

## EAT BEFORE YOU GO

Weight Watchers recommends eating a light meal before you go shopping. Fasting, they say, will backfire. This is true even if you ate a Thanksgiving meal in the late afternoon and you're going to go to a midnight sale. They quote Jessica DeCostole, a clinical dietitian at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital, who recommends a protein-carb combo of leftovers — a few slices of turkey, some green beans and half of a baked potato.

If you're leaving in the morning, make sure you have a light, healthy breakfast high in protein and fiber. Avoid pastries, processed cereal, or worse, leftover pie from the night before. Not that you can't raid the leftovers. You can make an omelet with leftover turkey and veggies or have a turkey sandwich on a bagel.



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## PACK FOOD

One great way to control what you eat and stick with healthy eating habits is to take food with you. This might be a lunch packed in a cooler or snacks that will get you through the energy demands of shopping between meals. Take along a pack of nuts, a piece of fruit, string cheese or a whole-grain snack bar, DeCostole recommends.

While you won't want to stick it in your purse, you can

take a small container of hummus and a plastic bag of veggies such as celery, carrots or cucumbers.

If you want to get fancy, scour the recipe sites online and look for recipes for snacks you can make in advance and take with you such as espresso bites, homemade trail mix or egg muffin cups.

## TAKE A WATER BOTTLE

Shopping is not the time to

get dehydrated. You don't want to start fighting headaches or getting muscle cramps. Drink often and refill your water bottle throughout the day. While you can buy water bottles as you shop, it not only gets expensive, but it isn't as kind to the environment as a reusable water bottle filled with tap water.

Also, make sure you drink water once you get home from shopping, just as you would if you had been exercising.

## A RESTAURANT STOP

Black Friday shopping is often done with friends and relatives. While you might scatter at some points, pick a restaurant in advance as a meeting point for lunch (or dinner for those die-hard, day-long shoppers). It will keep you from binging on the cookies, pretzels or cinnamon rolls in the booths and stores you pass.

Perhaps you can even get your non-shopping friends to join you.

# Keep Up on Social Media

You've got mad social media skills and Black Friday is the perfect time to reap the benefits.

Whether you are a resident of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Pinterest, you can use your favorite community to find great deals and share shopping news.

Businesses know you are out there and are increasingly investing in advertising (which creates shopping information for you) on social media. According to an Interactive Advertising Bureau report, ad spending on social media was up to \$41.5 billion in 2020.

Forbes reached out to shoppers as part of a study in 2021 and found that two-thirds of shoppers use social media as part of their shopping strategy. The most popular place to research purchases? YouTube. Second and third were Facebook and Instagram.

## CHOOSE YOUR INFLUENCERS

Who do you trust to give you the best and most honest shopping information? Is it a live-streamer? Is it a YouTube channel? Is it the community of moms you've been trading baby pictures with for the past 15 years?

Find out what they have to say about the items on your shopping list and the best place to get them. Do they know of a local alternative to a



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big box store? Can they tell you where to get a great coupon? Is there a video that compares different brands and warns you what to watch out for?

According to the Forbes study, a third of all shoppers consult social media influencers when they are doing product research.

## PICK YOUR HASHTAGS

Hashtags point you to conversations you care about. Some popular shopping ones this time of year according to the best-hashtags website are #shoplocal, #BlackFriday,

#CyberMonday, #BlackFridaysales and #BlackFridaydeals.

Every November, Instagram hosts a #BuyBlack celebration to promote Black-owned businesses throughout the month. They host Live Shopping events, curate collections from Black-owned businesses, and present interviews with Black-owned businesses.

## FOLLOW YOUR FAVORITE STORES

Retailers often offer exclusive deals and promotions on their Facebook, Instagram and Twitter feeds. Others will

reward customers who like or follow them with special alerts, discounts and incentives.

## SHARE YOUR FINDS

Share your finds throughout the day on your social media and check out what your friends are finding. You may even want to open a place such as a Facebook group or a Pinterest page where you can make posts throughout the day or help each other find things you know others are looking for. Can't find that science kit for your 13-year-old daughter? Make a post asking

if your fellow shoppers have seen it in their travels. Or post pictures of what your friends are asking for along with a location tag so they can get there.

## SHOP DIRECTLY

While it isn't always easy to do yet, social commerce — doing your actual shopping on a social media platform — is becoming more common. According to Accenture, an information technology company, this kind of shopping is projected to account for \$1.2 trillion sales by 2025, up from \$492 billion in 2021.