



A ROADMAP TO BECOMING AN INFORMED CONSUMER

Young or old, we all buy stuff. Sometimes finding the cheapest product feels like a win, but not too soon. Lowest cost may mean compromising on your health or quality of the goods, but going for the most expensive choice is not nice for the wallet either. We have access to an abundance of information (sometimes too much of it) and still, falling for a scam is easier than you think, and buying products you don't need is all too common.

Considering how the products you buy affect your health and finances may sound tedious, but it is easier than it seems and will save you a lot of headache and poor decisions. We have a four-step process, and a few neat links to make a happy consumer out of you. When you get in the habit of asking these questions before buying something, it will be like second nature to you. And then before you know it, you're an informed consumer, and the satisfaction of making good choices will have you feeling proud of yourself.

FOUR CONSIDERATIONS TO MAKE BEFORE MAKING A PURCHASE



1. **What does your budget say?** – Frequent evaluation of your finances and a quick look at your accounts before making an unexpected purchase can help to dodge a stressful situation.
2. **Are you prioritizing your health?** – As much as we want to save money, it should never be at the expense of your health.
3. **Are you sure you are smarter than the scammers?** – We all know not to respond to fishy emails, but any consumer, especially when shopping online, is vulnerable to counterfeit goods and even theft.
4. **Are you smarter than the marketers?** – Have you ever bought something and then never used it again? A few simple guidelines can put an end to that for good.

FOUR CONSIDERATIONS TO MAKE BEFORE MAKING A PURCHASE

WHAT DOES YOUR BUDGET SAY?

We have three points of consideration for you on this:

- First, having a budget that shows categories of expenses is necessary to track how much you're spending on what, and if you have gone over the limit. When you are aware of your budget for accounts such as groceries, bills, and personal expenses, you know when it's time to slow down and save. Same goes for the unexpended purchases. Do you have a budget set aside for less common buys such as electronics or kitchen appliances? Is it coming from personal spending account? If not, you need to save first and buy later. Consider waiting until the item goes on sale unless there is an immediate need.
- Second, compare the products across different (reputable) stores. If a store with a lower price for the same item is out of the way and you do not want to order online, ask a more convenient store about price matching. A lot of electronic stores do that!
- Third, consider if the quality is worth the money. Reviews are helpful here, but be careful because there are a lot of fake reviews out there. [This website](#) is handy when evaluating which reviews to trust – plug in the link from Amazon for example, and it will give you a score of their trustworthiness. An excellent source is [this website](#) that offers unbiased rankings for products on the market.

ARE YOU PRIORITIZING YOUR HEALTH?

Recent trends show that millennials are willing to pay premium prices for health-conscious products than the previous generations. This may be a reflection of our society moving towards a preventative health model. Putting your health first can eliminate the need for treating illnesses later on in life. There are a few things you could do to ensure that your purchase does not harm you:

- Online shopping is convenient, but count the risks – products from unknown sellers can come with unknown substances (especially when a product is coming from an outside country with different health regulations). Go for reputable brands that list their materials and ingredients.
- Become aware of which chemicals are carcinogenic (cancer-causing substances). If you are prone to allergies, learn which allergens to avoid. It's impossible to avoid every single synthetic chemical, but you can do your part in limiting the number of toxins your body is exposed to¹.
- Read the instructions. There are a few questions you should ask yourself - what is the proper way of using the item and what are you advised not to do with it? Are there harmful combinations of this products with something else? Are there long-term health effects of chemicals in beauty products or cookware that you are purchasing? How long can you use this product for?

¹ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/vanessa-cunningham/dangerous-beauty-products_b_4168587.html

ARE YOU SMARTER THAN A SCAMMER?

Counterfeit products are not going away. Is the deal too good to be true? Then you may be getting ripped off. Sales are great, but there is a point where a purchase too good from an unrecognized store should become suspicious.

- Avoid making purchases based on excitement or fascination of the advertisement alone.
- Look for a market price of the item in different stores, if the price is unbelievably different, consider it worrisome.
- Read reviews about the company and search for testimonies outside of the company's website. Online forums and [websites like this](#) are great resources for that.

ARE YOU SMARTER THAN A MARKETER?

They want you to think you need it, and you will inevitably fall for some marketing. If the product is good, it's worth the fall. Being able to recognize what product is as good as promised is a skill, but to know if you actually need it and will use it when it arrives to your doorsteps can be tricky. There is a simple solution – sleep on it. Avoid making same-day purchases and see if you are still as excited about it the next morning. If there is a time-sensitive sale or need, prioritize doing research first, and do not skip steps 1, 2, and 3.

RELEVANT RESOURCES

<https://www.fakespot.com/>

<https://extensivelyreviewed.com/>

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/vanessa-cunningham/dangerous-beauty-products_b_4168587.html

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