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Cyber Monday vs. Black Friday

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Black Friday vs. Cyber Monday: When to Score the Best Deals



by [Tiffani Sherman](#)

Contributor

You're not imagining things. This year, the winter holiday sales started even before the pumpkin spice items

were marked down.

The days of the winter holiday shopping season officially kicking off on Black Friday — and exclusive Cyber Monday deals — are gone.

“Consistently over the last decade, we know that consumers are out in the market earlier than ever and the holiday season is getting extended into the fall,” said [National Retail Federation President](#) and CEO [Matthew Shay](#). “Retailers are finding ways in which to meet consumer expectations and deliver value, so the holiday season continues to get expanded which provides consumers more time to shop.”

According to Salesforce, sales were up 10% year over year from 2020 to 2021 in the first three weeks of November, and like previous years, they predict people will shop early again in an attempt to get the very best deals and jump start checking things off their shopping list with great discounts.

According to the NRF, the holiday season runs from Nov. 1 through Dec. 31, and many of their predictions are based on that timeframe. This year, the federation projected, sales will grow between 6% and 8% above last year’s record season.

“We do know that consumers are looking for discounts, they’re looking for deals, for value to stretch their dollars in the face of higher energy prices and housing prices,” Shay said. “We know that they’re looking for those opportunities and we think that’s going to continue on for the holiday season. They’re going to be looking for bargains and values as the holiday season begins in earnest.”

Use our strategies for [beating this year’s supply chain issues](#) as you plan your holiday shopping lists.

Good deals are abound this holiday season, but what’s better — shopping on Black Friday or Cyber Monday?

What Is Black Friday?

Traditionally, Black Friday — the day after Thanksgiving — was the unofficial start to the holiday shopping season.

Stores would offer great deals on things like [televisions](#), electronics, [appliances](#) and other items to get people into their doors.

Some retailers would open early in the morning on Friday, even as early as midnight. The most dedicated shoppers even pitched tents to camp out for the best spots in long lines, in the hopes to score a discount.

Often quantities were limited, so only the first few people in the stores would snag the best deals.

Part of the fun was the thrill of it all, but online shopping started to chip away at Black Friday’s prominence.

What Is Cyber Monday?

When online shopping began to take hold, online retailers wanted to jump onboard the Black Friday frenzy,

creating Cyber Monday deals to attract online shoppers.

They knew many people would be back at work and looking at a screen come Monday morning, so online shopping deals on the Monday after Thanksgiving became a thing.

The Inflation Effect

Inflation, which is leading to the higher costs of things this year, is on everyone's mind. And it's impacting consumer behavior.

"I think we're seeing continued stratification among households based on income levels. Spending at higher levels continues to be robust and for consumers and households at slightly lower levels, it remains durable and resilient," Shay explained. "But those lower income households in particular are feeling the pinch of rising costs on everyday essentials and those are the households we're paying close attention to as we move into the holiday season."

Shay said people are supplementing their spending with savings and credit to give themselves a cushion. Salesforce reported in 2021, usage of buy-now-pay-later options grew 29% globally — \$22 billion was financed.

How Retailers Are Adapting to the Changes in Holiday Shopping Behavior

The NRF says retailers understand that people are looking for holiday items earlier than ever before, which is why many traditional red and green items were already on display right next to the Halloween stuff.

Sales and deals are well underway, both in brick-and-mortar retail stores and online. The NRF reports that 56% of shoppers plan to do at least some of their shopping online, 48% plan to shop at discount stores, 47% say they'll shop at department stores, and 45% will shop at grocery stores and supermarkets.

Hopefully, salespeople will be able to handle the load and many are already in place.

"We expect retailers will hire between 450,000 to 600,000 seasonal workers and that compares with about 670,000 last year. Some of that hiring may have been pulled earlier into the season to meet the evolving consumer demand," Shay explained.

Stores themselves are also changing and getting more creative in how they manage their inventory and create an experience for their customers.

"While we saw a spike in online shopping [during the pandemic], we know that consumers really do enjoy the in-store experience and in some ways are reverting back to some of that pre-pandemic behavior," Shay said. "But when they get to the store, the experience is not the pre-pandemic experience. It's a changed experience and consumers are learning to think about stores differently."

He added many consumers are ordering online and picking up in the store, or shopping in the store and having it delivered to their homes. Retailers are taking these behaviors into account and managing their

inventory in a more sophisticated way and creating a healthier environment for the retail industry.

When Are the Best Deals?

Even though the sales have already begun, there are still fantastic deals to be had after Thanksgiving.

“It’s my belief that [the early start] has probably pulled some sales forward, but we will see continued deals and promotions,” said NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz. “November and December are still the major months for shopping and it will probably just expand the season and provide a bit more time to shop.”

Kleinhenz said he expects clothing to be a hot spending category this year, possibly because people want to look good after not traveling to see friends and family during the pandemic.

Even though the traditional five day shopping period between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday is becoming less and less of a thing, it’s still important.

Last year, Salesforce reported that Black Friday was the biggest shopping day of that traditional time period, but the whole month of November was strong.

It’s also a tradition for some friends and family, and one that is hard to break. A September survey by NRF and Prosper Insights & Analytics revealed 45% of people they talked to say they are likely to browse and buy in stores on Black Friday this year.

How to Prepare for Black Friday and Cyber Monday Sales

The supply chain issues and shipping delays that haunted us last year aren’t as bad this year as many retailers got their inventory into their stores and warehouses early.

This year, it’s inflation causing issues.

The NRF says a recent survey showed 44% of shoppers say they plan to purchase seasonal items now because they think prices might go up instead of down.

Here’s how to make your overall shopping experience a bit easier and possibly save you money or help you earn rewards.

- **Make a list:** (And check it twice). Having an idea of what you want to buy can help you focus your energy when you either go into a store or go online.
- **Know sale dates:** If you wait, it may be too late to get that popular item you’re coveting. If there is something you know you want, look at the store’s website to see if you can get it now. Many stores offer price matching if prices go down.
- **Follow stores on social media, sign up for their emails:** Stores might offer specials or codes only for people who follow them on social media, or sign up for their emails.
- **Join a store’s membership program:** Some stores have special deals or offer early access customers who are members of their membership or rewards clubs. Sometimes even the return

policies are different for club members. Some charge a monthly fee, so check if the savings will justify the cost.

Looking for more advice? The Penny Hoarder founder [revealed his best tips](#) for Black Friday shopping.

Ready to Shop? Get the Most Out of the Holiday Shopping Deals

Many of the large retailers have already started their promotions. Here's a rundown of some of them.

Amazon

The holiday deals kicked off on Amazon in early October with a sale for Prime Members.

During that time, members ordered 100 million items, with 8 million of those being toys.

The best selling categories were apparel, home items, toys, and amazon devices.

The sales and deals will continue throughout the holiday season, and this year, customers can use the popular payment app Venmo to pay for purchases.

Best Buy

Best Buy began its [holiday deals](#) October 10 and they run through the end of December.

Members of Best Buy Totaltech™ and My Best Buy® will have exclusive access to what the retailer is calling “Member Mondays” and early access to the Black Friday deals taking place beginning November 20.

Cyber deals are beginning November 27 and what Best Buy is calling “20 Days of Deals” begins November 29.

The return window is until January 14, 2023 for items purchased between October 24 and December 31, 2022.

Kohl's

Kohl's has begun what it's calling a “November Full of Savings,” billed as a campaign to give customers an opportunity to shop when and how they want.

After already having a few days of early deals, the store is continuing “Dashing Deal Days” in November and December with extra savings and Kohl's Cash for use on future purchases.

The store is also doing an entire Black Friday week of deals beginning November 20 as well as deals specific to the days of Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

Physical stores will be closed on Thanksgiving Day.

As for returns, Kohl's accepts returns for most items up to 180 days after purchase, but there are exceptions

for some products.

Target

Target has already started advertising its Black Friday deals, three weeks earlier than they did last year.

New “Weeklong Black Friday Deals” debut every Sunday through Thanksgiving weekend and a “Deal of the Day” comes out daily. A weekly online ad will have a preview of the deals on Fridays.

Both types of deals are available in store, online, and through the Target app. Some offers are only available online.

Although Target advertises that the deals feature their best planned prices for the holiday season, they are offering a “Holiday Price Match Guarantee” if the item sells for a lower price between October 6 and December 24.

The store is mostly keeping its standard return policy throughout the holiday season, with 90 days to return an unopened item.

For electronics and entertainment items, the 30-day refund period for many items begins on December 26 for items purchased October 6 through December 25.

Walmart

[Walmart](#) is doing what it's calling “Black Friday Deals for Days,” spreading deals over three November events, capping things off on Cyber Monday.

New online deals begin at 7 p.m. ET every Monday in November and members of Walmart + get seven hours of early access starting at noon ET.

The deals continue in stores a few days later.

As for returns, Walmart is calling it “no concerns” returns, allowing any item purchased after October 1 to be returned through January 31.

Many stores will be offering curbside returns and some will even pick up your items from your home.

Overall Holiday Sales Picture

The NRF reports that many shoppers start their shopping before November to:

- Spread out the shopping budget.
- Avoid the stress of last minute shopping.
- Avoid crowds.
- Take advantage of good prices and promotions.
- Avoid missing out on specific items.

The NRF predicts people will spend \$832.84 on gifts and holiday items this year, saying a September survey of 2,000 shoppers showed people think it is important to spend on holiday gifts and celebrations and are willing to cut back in other areas.

“We know that retailers are prepared to deliver great value this year and we know consumers continue to be emotionally invested in the holidays and this is a time of year that people save for and plan for,” the NRF’s CEO Shay said. “We think we’re in a good position to meet consumer demand and to navigate the challenges that both consumers and retailers are facing to deliver a very healthy holiday season.”

Tiffani Sherman is a Florida-based freelance reporter with more than 25 years of experience writing about finance, health, travel and other topics.
