
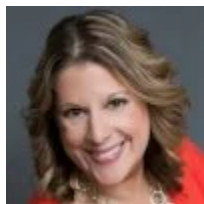


5 Items That Are Better Deals On Black Friday and Cyber Monday

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by Tiffani Sherman

Contributor

The National Retail Federation says that some 2 million more people are expected to shop in stores this year over Thanksgiving weekend compared to 2020. Charles Rex Arbogast/AP Images

Gone are the days when you needed to pitch a tent in front of a big box store to be the first in line on Black Friday and get the best deals for the holiday shopping season.

What was once the traditional start of the holiday season has morphed into several weeks of sales, some starting in early October. Then there's Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday, both of which happen after Black Friday. For 2021, those dates are Black Friday (Nov. 26), Small Business Saturday (Nov. 27) and Cyber Monday (Nov. 29).

There are deals to be had tied to both Black Friday and Cyber Monday, mostly in the five categories of tech, beauty, clothing, toys and home products. Take a deep breath though, pandemic-caused supply chain issues may make certain items in those categories difficult to find.

Bicycles won't be plentiful but skateboards are, according to Amazon which promises delivery on many models well before Christmas. Game consoles? A tough get. TVs? More likely.

Be realistic and flexible. And start planning now because according to the National Retail Federation's Annual November Holiday Consumer Survey, about 2 million more people plan to shop between Thanksgiving Day and Cyber Monday this year compared to last year, with the most activity happening on Black Friday.

Use our strategies for beating this year's supply chain issues as you plan your holiday shopping lists.

Holiday Shopping on Cyber Monday vs. Black Friday

Nearly half of shoppers (49%) started buying gifts before November, which is up from 42% last year, according to the NRF.

The NRF also said on average consumers plan to spend \$997.73 on gifts this year, which is close to what it was last year, but less than it was pre-pandemic.

Katherine Cullen, NRF's senior director of Industry and Consumer Insights, said there is a lot of excitement around Thanksgiving weekend shopping this year.

“Last year, we were in a very different place. There was a lot of uncertainty and people felt a lot of concern around shopping in stores and shopping in person. We're just in a different place this year. What it means is we are expecting to see a lot more shopping in stores.”

The NRF survey showed about two-thirds of people who planned to shop on Black Friday were heading into brick and mortar stores.

“It's kind of a signal that people are looking to bring back some of the traditions they had in the past in terms of how they shopped over Thanksgiving weekend,” Cullen said.

Here's how you can prepare for the biggest shopping time of the year.

When Are the Best Deals?

The best deals on Black Friday are traditionally for expensive big ticket items like TVs, laptops, phones, and other technology. (But, again, some of those items may be tough to get in time for the holiday. An IOU maybe and hope for January delivery?)

Once online shopping started to take off, online retailers wanted to get into the frenzy, so they began Cyber Monday, knowing many people would be back to work on Monday and therefore are often at computers. With most of us carrying smartphones, we can shop 24/7 no matter where we are.

Traditionally, the deals are usually the best for fashion, small appliances, and beauty items but Cullen said since everything is basically becoming a five-day shopping period, the categories for the sales are blurring also.

Black Friday and its epic sales have become a way to get customers who have the day off into stores to spend money. Now, many of the deals are also online.

American Express created Small Business Saturday in 2010 to encourage shoppers to patronize small and local businesses and not just large retailers during the holiday shopping season. Many small stores will offer deals the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Over the years, the lines between the days have become blurry, creating one mishmash of sales that blend together.

What's the Average Discount?

The short answer about deals is it depends on what you are looking for.

According to 2020 data from Salesforce, the average discount rate was 28% on Thanksgiving Thursday and then grew to 29% by Cyber Monday.

But with some items in short supply, experts are warning us to not hold out for a better deal if you find something you like,

“We do encourage people, particularly with what’s going on the supply chains right now, is if you see an item that you’re looking for on sale at a price you’re willing to pay, don’t wait,” Cullen warned. “Inventory is a little tighter this year. We are hearing from retailers this year that they are offering promotions and discounts, but they’re not holding off until the last minute to offer those, so if you see something you’re looking for, go ahead and buy it.”

Quantities of an item might be limited, so once they’re gone, they’re gone and so are the major discounts.

Night owls might be able to find the best prices since many retailers post new deals at midnight.

How to Prepare for Black Friday and Cyber Monday Sales

To help you get what you want, it may pay off to prepare a bit whether you plan to physically go into a store or shop online during the holiday weekend or before.

- **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.
- **Look at ads:** Many stores have already released their Black Friday and Cyber Monday deals. Some have even started their sales.
- **Use online tools:** Cullen suggested utilizing the tools many stores have online about quantities available both online and in stores and how many people are shopping for that particular item. It can help you find what you need.
- **Know sale dates:** Many stores are offering great deals long before Black Friday, so if you wait until then, it may be too late. If there is something you know you want, look at the store’s web site to see if you can get it now.
- **Check return policies:** Some stores will allow you to return an item to a brick and mortar store if you no longer want the item. Others require online returns. Many retailers have extended their return policies beyond their usual 14, 30, 60, or 90 days from date of purchase to some time after the new year.

- **Consider price adjustments or price matching:** Some retailers will offer price adjustments if you buy an item and then either they later offer it at a lower price or a competitor does. Just be aware, some retailers exclude Black Friday deals from these practices since the quantities are limited for many items.
- **Follow stores on social media:** Cullen said many stores will offer specials on top of specials and social media might be a good way to snag them when they happen.

“What we see changing is more of a move towards deals of the hour with different items and different release times throughout the day,” Cullen said. “Customers should keep an eye out for some of those things because something unexpected might pop up on sale.”

Store Specific Information

To help shoppers prepare for online holiday sales, many retailers have released details about their pricing, returns, and more.

Here is some basic information about a few big retailers to help you get the best deals.

Amazon

Amazon began holiday deals in early October to get things started early. They have a “Holiday Gift List” feature you can make and share with people to help them buy you a gift you want. You can also ask friends and family members for their lists.

To make things easier, Prime members can send a gift to someone with just the recipient’s cell phone number. No need to ruin the surprise by asking someone’s physical address.

Best Buy

Best Buy started offering sale prices early in November with more deals launching closer to Thanksgiving.

They’re offering what they call a “Black Friday Price Guarantee” where if you buy something and the price goes down before Black Friday, they will refund the difference.

Returns are extended until Jan. 16.

Target

Target began advertising holiday deals on Oc. 31. They start each Sunday and last a week and are available for online, in store pickup, and in store purchase.

Deals labeled as “Holiday Best” will be the best price of the season, no matter when you see it. If a price goes lower, you can ask for a price match up until Dec. 24. They will also match a competitor’s price for 14 days.

Walmart

Walmart says they reinvented the Black Friday shopping experience in 2020 and are returning it this year.

They're calling it "Black Friday Deals for Days" with several shopping events leading up to Christmas Day, Dec. 25. Items will be available while supplies last.

Walmart + members will get early access to these deals. Offers will be available first online and then in stores.

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