

Is Shopping on Black Friday Really Worth It?

It's probably the single most important question you need to answer before you choose to embark on any store the day after Thanksgiving: Is shopping on Black Friday really worth it?

The hyped holiday shopping day that bargain hunters across the country have been eagerly anticipating has at last arrived. Black Friday enthusiasts are already at the stores, but for you at home, it's time to decide if you'll gain anything by joining them.

1. The crowds

We've all seen the news footage – hordes of shoppers pushing their way through store doors and overflowing into aisles filled with [the season's hottest products](#). There's shoving, trampling and, yes, sometimes even fighting.

If you opt to go shopping on Black Friday, you definitely won't be alone. You'll have [lots of shopping competition](#) vying for the biggest retail sales. Even if you manage to get your hands on the product you want, you'll need to emerge from the heart of the store and head toward the registers, where you'll stand in some extremely long lines.

The craziness may be even worse this year, as 66 percent of 500 consumers in a 2014 holiday survey by consulting company Accenture responded they're likely to shop on Black Friday 2014, compared to only 55 percent who planned to do so in 2013. And of those planning to shop, nearly half said they'll head to a brick-and-mortar store between 6 p.m. Thanksgiving Day and 5 a.m. on Friday.

When weighing the pros and cons of shopping on the day after Thanksgiving, consider whether you have the patience and stamina to hold your own in the crowds.

2. The deals

Look at the front page of almost any Black Friday ad, and you're sure to be impressed by the big TVs and fancy tablets, all for hundreds of dollars off. Read the fine print, though, and you may be disappointed. Usually the best deals, called doorbusters, are available only in limited quantities. In some cases, this means only two of each item will be in stock per store location. If you're not one of the very first shoppers, you're likely to miss out.

Even if you are able to take home one of those [prized doorbusters](#), the deal you're getting may not be as great as you think. A recent NerdWallet analysis found that 93 percent of retailers advertised products for the exact same price for Black Friday 2014 as they did for Black Friday 2013. Thus, some deals may be repeats and not impressive savings opportunities. Consider how substantial the discounts really are before sacrificing your day at the mall.

3. The day

Black Friday sales used to take place only on Black Friday, but that's certainly not true anymore. Now, shoppers can find impressive sale prices in the days and weeks immediately before and after the highly anticipated shopping day. For example, for the past month, Home Depot has been hosting an early Black Friday sale, with appliance deals lasting for the entire month of November. Wal-Mart's seasonal deals are

taking place over a five-day period this year. Nearly every major store is extending its sale event into the weekend after Thanksgiving.

Besides such multiple-day Black Friday sales, you can also find plenty of equal (or even better) discount opportunities on days unrelated to the post-Thanksgiving shopping event. In fact, some items – [like toys](#) – are best purchased closer to Christmas, when prices are anticipated to drop even lower. If you feel the urge to go Black Friday shopping because you think you'll be able to grab the absolute best prices of the season, you should probably think again.

What's it worth to you?

For ordinary Americans looking for a good sale, the famous post-Thanksgiving shopping event may not be all it's cracked up to be. If you fall into this category, you can stay home without fearing that you're missing out. With the crowds, lackluster deals and ample opportunities for sale prices on other days of the year, shopping on the day after Thanksgiving may be more hassle than it's worth. But if you still want to get some shopping done, you can always [opt for online sales](#).

For social shoppers, Black Friday is an indispensable element of the holiday season, a matter of tradition. Thanksgiving dinner must be followed by cash registers and bags full of gifts. If you fall into this category, the shopping extravaganza is worth it simply for the experience.

For deal-finder die-hards, Black Friday is a science. It requires pitching a tent, claiming your spot in line and camping out for days at a time. If you fall into this category, Black Friday is worth it for those few coveted price cuts. And whom are we kidding? If this is you, you're probably in line at your favorite retailer right now and not even near your computer to read any advice telling you otherwise.