



## **“Shopping for Back to School”**

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Going back to school is an exciting time! I remember when I taught at the high school, the middle of summer prompted me to get ready for my classroom and new students. This meant clothes, school supplies, and a new routine. This year is very different for all the rest, with the COVID pandemic. COVID has changed our routines and places of learning. We may be learning at home, in school, or a combination of these. The important thing to remember is that academics is the main goal and to encourage critical thought. Part of critical thinking is using your resources wisely.

The beginning of the school year is a fun time no matter what your age! From kindergarten to college, there are exciting challenges ahead. For the parents or guardians who are helping you to prepare, thank you! Getting all your supplies can be stressful and expensive. Hopefully, these back to school tips help ease your stress.

To begin shopping for school, a master list will be helpful, especially if you have multiple students. Use ONE calendar to keep track of every event and person. Use paper (I like a giant calendar to see future dates), electronic, or a combination of both. Give everyone access to them and encourage them to look at it daily. A paper one is tough to keep updated, I use mine to see future dates and I use my google calendar to check daily events and appointments.

Before purchasing school supplies, take an inventory of your supplies on hand. Do you really need 1,000 pencils or fifty sweaters? A shopping list is essential *before* you arrive at the store or log in online. A list will take away the question of items that you *needed* when temptation arises. I love office supplies and at times have trouble resisting a bargain. It is not a bargain if it goes to waste and takes up all your free space. The money that you do not spend could be saved or used in other places.

If I have too many supplies, I will take the excess to a non-profit who assists children or give to someone who wants them. It may take a little time to find your excess items a new home.

In July, school supplies, close-out summer clothes, furniture, and new fall clothes go on SALE. Check out the sale flyers for any items that you may need (see your master list). Discounts can be acquired by using your loyal cards, store sales, rebates, and rain checks (if the store is out of sale item).

In addition to your regular school supply list, and depending on your age, you may need other supplies to go back to learning. The COVID pandemic has created a need for other materials and supplies. Items include a dedicated workspace at home, earbuds or headphones, laptop or two monitors with workstation, and a printer. In addition to hand sanitizer, a mask, and sanitizing wipes. These extra items add to the cost of school supplies.

If you are a teacher or a student than you may be eligible for deeper savings. Be sure to ask for a discount in person or when chatting with the company representative. The worse that they can say is NO.

When shopping online, type in the businesses name, online coupons, and current year in the search bar. Specials may include free shipping, extra product (s), and percentages off merchandise. Also using the word's money saving, discounts, and price matching may help for finding online discounts. Remember when paying online that the web address needs to indicate that it is a SECURE encrypted, website. Your browser will have an s after the http.

Example: <https://www.website.com>

Next when shopping, I find it best to go to least number of stores. This saves on time, energy, and money. I tend to stay on my list when going to less stores. You know which strategies work for you to stay on your list and budget, do them.

In conclusion, here are a few ways to save money when buying school supplies.

1. Make a list
2. Use a master calendar for everyone in household
3. Take inventory of your supplies
4. Check sales (in flyers and online)
5. When buying online, use a secure website to pay
6. Go to the least amount of stores