

Consignment and Thrift Store Shopping Tips

Courtesy of
Teresa Riccobuono
Professional Organizer
SimplyOrganized.com

What to Wear:

Comfortable slip-on shoes
Flattering undergarments
Easy on and off clothing - on the bottom; leggings, sweat pants or full elastic waist skirt
on the top; bra top, fitted t-shirt, loose v-neck or zip front top
Shoulder bag or backpack - not a hand held purse
Regular hair and make-up - if you don't feel like yourself, nothing is going to look right on you

What to Bring:

Articles you are trying to match or swatches (clothing or home furnishings)
Color analysis swatches
List of what to buy
List of Do's and Dont's and brands that work or don't work
Nylons or try on nylon peds
Clothing and shoe sizes if shopping for others
Measurements if shopping for home or office furnishings
Tape measure
Hand Sanitizer
Water and snacks
An open mind
An empty bladder (most thrift stores don't have public restrooms)
Your common sense (don't let bargain prices hypnotize you)
Items from home that you are donating

What to Leave at Home:

Children – unless you are shopping for them
Significant other if he or she is not interested in the search

Shopping Tips:

Shop out of season – I found a beautiful pink coat, half off on Fourth of July that I enjoyed wearing the following winter

Look in the children's and men's sections, also the pajama section

Look in the bins

Don't always believe the size label

Try both shoes on

Always check the items for spots or color fading in daylight at the store's window

Be persistent 1 to 4 hours per month, early morning (the store is usually quieter and neater)

Some snags can be fixed with a small crochet hook

Zout (terrific stain remover found at most drug stores), bleach and a Q-tip (works well on white 100% cotton items)

Other items to look for: family clothing, jewelry, books, CDs, dishes, glasses, bedding (comforters), decorative pillows, towels, and other home furnishings, furniture, electronics, camping equipment

If you can't think of two or three things in your closet that this item will go with, consider leaving it

What to check on the garment:

Zippers should lay flat, they should not be warped

Zippers should work (clothing and accessories such as purses, back packs)

All buttons should be attached, and match (check the inside seam for possible extras)

Check all seams and hems. Are they coming un-sewn

Is there a hole where the garment label was

Do stripes and plaids match at the seams

Is the lining ripped or excessively worn

Check knits thoroughly for mis-weaves, snags, unraveling (especially around the neckline)

Is the neck stretched out; is the garment too stretched out all over

Is the center of the garment laying or hanging in the center or is it twisted

Check thoroughly for stains (especially underarms and chest on tops, front thigh area on pants)

Is the hand of the garment pleasing to the touch

What is the fabric content; acrylic pills and loses its shape easily; silk, linen and wool require special (sometimes expensive) care; chenille wears thin

Are there moth holes

Check both shoes for same size, try both on (yes, this is on the list twice, for good reason)

Why are these items here:

Returns from traditional stores

Impulse purchase by original owner

Size change

Gifts from others

Career change, retirement, death

Large and small damages

Out of style

Thrift Store Etiquette:

Common courtesy should prevail.

If you are going to look at a rack of clothing that someone is already looking at, pay attention to which direction they are going and follow their lead. Don't start too close to them, they were there first. You can always pass this rack and return to it later.

If the racks are too close together and you need to scoot by someone, say "may I please scoot by you?" and then "thank you." See rule number one.

If a garment (or other item) falls on the floor while you are looking in that area, please pick it up and put it in its rightful place. Most thrift stores are run by volunteers and it takes a lot of man power to keep things in order.

Please obey the fitting room signs. If the store is quiet, you can take an extra item or two in and be okay. If the store is busy, pay attention if a line is starting to form waiting to get in. Finish with your allotted number of garments and let someone else in. You can come back and finish. If someone else is disobeying this rule it is okay to ask store personnel to ask them to come out and let others in.

Be careful about leaving items you are interested in purchasing on hold. Make sure they are set behind the counter or in another safe location. If it is a treasure, someone may scoop it up accidentally. If you leave it on the rack outside of the fitting room, store personnel may think it has been tried on and needs to be returned to the sales floor.

Compliment others if they have found a great treasure.

If someone absolutely loves something in your basket and you are lukewarm about it, let them have it.

Share your favorite locations with others.

Add some of your own tips as time goes by:
