

# SITE REVIEWS

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## SPECIAL FEATURE

### Everyone's Doing It Group Shopping: Lowers Prices, Raises Credit Card Bills.

By Tamar Maor

Everyone looks for deals when shopping. Instead of searching through the paper for sales, join the new craze of group shopping to save yourself some cash. These programs work by having people join together online to buy a product. The more people who buy, the lower the price drops (within reason). Essentially you get a wholesale price for buying one item.

The most popular of these programs is Mercata.com ([mercata.com](http://mercata.com)), where you can buy anything from electronics to hiking and camping equipment. Mercata offers a great feature where you can reserve a product and it will automatically purchase it if the price drops to whatever you specify. Browsing this site will lead you to purchase many more gadgets than necessary, so fix yourself a budget before logging on.

Volumebuy ([volumebuy.com](http://volumebuy.com)) offers three types of group purchase discounts, and each item in their catalog falls into one category. The first option is a time power pool, where there are several time periods with fixed



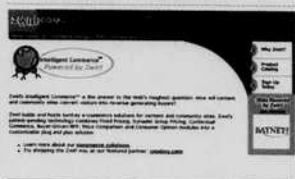
prices. The longer you wait, the less you pay because the program allows Volumebuy more time to receive orders and get a greater volume discount. The second option is flex power,

where the price drops as more people enter the group at any stage of the sale. The third—group power pools—work only if the specified amount of people purchase the item; then everyone receives the product. All three styles of discount offer lower prices than MSRP, however cross-checking other sites is a good idea before tying yourself down.

Mobshop ([mobshop.com](http://mobshop.com)) has a similar selection as Mercata, but offers some unique features that might make it a superior site to some. Mobshop is offering free shipping in the U.S., so if you're purchasing something rather large it could be beneficial for you to pay more but not pay for shipping. They also have an excellent notification program. You can either reserve a spot if the price drops to a certain level, or you can be notified by e-mail so you can make the decision then. Being notified is convenient because it gives you a little more time to decide if you'd rather spend that money on an evening at the bar, or perhaps it's already spent.



If none of these sites offer what you want, direct your browser to Zwirl.com ([zwirl.com](http://zwirl.com)). It works on a different concept: Groups of buyers interested in the same sort of product band together. Sellers look at the specifications of each group's request, and make them an offer based on the amount of people in the group. Joining a group allows you



to discuss the product with other members, look at product reviews, and view suggested helpful links. If a group for the product

you're looking for doesn't exist, you can create one on your own, perhaps other people will join and a seller will make an offer. If no one joins your group, try [pricewatch.com](http://pricewatch.com) to find a low price on the product.

Group buying offers some great deals for mainstream products. When looking to buy something from one of these sites, always compare the price they are offering to other general stores on the web. Many times the "great price" group buying list is not so great, and you can find a much better deal elsewhere. •

## SHOPPING

### Styleshop [styleshop.com](http://styleshop.com)

Are you a fashion diva, or the queen of finding the best deals around? Either way, check out [styleshop.com](http://styleshop.com) before your next mall trip. It gives you the latest information on the coolest brands and discounts at your favorite stores. Head-to-toe articles on where the latest trends are going, and super search capabilities will keep you ahead of the fashion crowd. *EFeick*

Usability: A- Content: A-



## SPORTS

### Crossrocket [crossrocket.com](http://crossrocket.com)

Looking for latest quarterpipe contest coverage, rookie snowboarder info, or xtreme sport gossip? Check out [crossrocket.com](http://crossrocket.com)'s site, where you can find all this and cool boarder movie trailers, photos, and a couple of interesting quotes from...Eminem? Well, if you're feeling frisky and particularly amoral, you can make bets with the Snowboard Bookie and compare notes worldwide or just with your friends. Adrenaline Theater, the folks behind this site, know what they're doing. *YTabi*

Usability: A- Content: B

### SweetSport.Com [sweetsport.com](http://sweetsport.com)

All you soccer fanatics out there take a breather and listen up: This is a site that you'll want to browse. Ever wanted to ask a pro soccer player for advice or chat with them about what it's like to play professional soccer? You can do it at [sweetsport.com](http://sweetsport.com). While surfing [sweetsport.com](http://sweetsport.com), ask a pro or coach for help. Players who haunt the site include Mark Chung, Robin Fraser and Tony Sanneh. *BKeith*

Content: A Usability: B+