

shop
online

Don't be a style dropout! Here's how to find the hottest fashion at great stores—without breaking your budget.

A new semester means it's time to refresh your wardrobe.

Style.

Some people have it in great abundance. Some spend their lives searching for it. Others pay through the nose for it. Every semester students face the same dilemma: how to find the hottest fashions without failing Economics 101. Here are a few ways to keep your wardrobe phat without having to spend a fortune.

Go online.

Does trying on clothes in a 3-foot-square dressing room under harsh fluorescent lights make you never want to shop again? Try shopping at the online version of your favorite retailer. Often, sites like The Gap (gap.com) and Banana Republic (www.bananarepublic.com) carry the same store item, as well as terrific sale items, discounted up to 20%-40% over the in-store price.

Look for bargains in unexpected places.

Shop in the young men's or juniors' sections of major department stores. Many large stores like Macy's (macys.com), Nordstrom (<http://store.nordstrom.com>) and Bloomingdale's (bloomingdales.com) sell

runway "knock-offs" that look just as good as famous-maker brands. Also, comb the discount racks at the very back of the men's and women's departments for clothes marked for reduction. Purchase clothes off their sites, which have sale and clearance sections and are a great place to find bargains.

Try visiting other neighborhood off-price retailers in your area.

A store in the next town may carry different merchandise. Ask the store manager what the best days of the week are to catch new items so you can have first pick on all the latest arrivals. Shop early in the morning or late at night because stores will be less crowded and quieter.

Learn to accessorize.

Sometimes you just need to add a bit of flair or funk to your wardrobe. The quality of clothing and accessories has improved in discount stores over the past 10 years. Check out your local Target (target.com), Kmart (bluelight.com) and Wal-Mart (walmart.com) for everything from sunglasses to shoes.

Speaking of shoes, the Birkenstock Express (birkenstockexpress.com) sells bargain and discontinued shoes so low they're practically giving them away. The company can also add you to a mailing list for announcements of upcoming specials.

Sure, you can buy hip clothes for less.

It just takes a little effort. Visit steamtunnels.net for more great shopping tips, as well as links to your favorite online retailers. •

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Links

Birkenstock Express
(<http://birkenstockexpress.com>)

Great for purchasing Birkenstocks. Has featured sales and clearance that you search by size. Also gives advice on how to care for the shoes and what size is best.

Nordstrom
(<http://store.nordstrom.com>)

Nice selection of items. Can return via mail, exchange at any store, or return only if purchased with a Nordstrom's card.

Macy's (macys.com)

Easy to navigate, and Macy's has a huge selection. The sale section only features exclusive sales, not marked-down items.

Bloomingdale's (bloomingdales.com)

Nicely organized with an incredible clearance section. Potential to make some really good buys.

Target (target.com)

Excellent store for buying inexpensive, quality, stylish items. Has a great clearance section.

Kmart (bluelight.com)

Very similar to Target, except Kmart has its famous BlueLight specials.

The Gap (gap.com)

Excellent site. Can purchase everything you would at the store, return by sending it back or by bringing it to any Gap store. If you can't find your size at a store, order it online. Good sale section and size chart.

Banana Republic
(www.bananarepublic.com)

Similar to Gap—these two retailers are owned by the same company—but with a more metro style.

