

Buy school supplies in bulk and save

The back-to-school season is fast approaching. This is a time of school bus traffic on the roads, anxious parents snapping first-day-of-school photos, and children will meeting their new classmates and forging new friendships.

This time of the year is also one when parents and students must shop for school supplies. Tradition dictates that families will flock to stores after dismissal and shop for folders, binders, pens and protractors. Caught up in the moment, many shoppers choose convenience over low prices on school supplies. Parents could end up at the check-out line with a considerable bill to pay, particularly if they are shopping for multiple students. Buying items in bulk – and sharing the cost – may be a more affordable option.

Although it can be easy to procrastinate and wait until

school starts to buy supplies, it might be prudent to shop before the new school year begins. Many teachers, in an attempt to help parents save money, publish school-supply lists online in advance of the school year. Most teachers do not vary their requirements from year to year, so if your son or daughter has been assigned a teacher, ask around among last year's students to see what that teacher requires. This way you can head to the store or comparison shop online at your convenience.

Some supplies are standard regardless of class assignment. These include pens and/or pencils, folders, spiral notebooks, copy paper, looseleaf paper, erasers, crayons, markers, and highlighters. Purchased individually, the per-unit cost of each item may be higher than purchasing these items in bulk. This is when the advantage of

buying in bulk shines through. Here are some helpful hints for parents about to shop for school supplies.

* Shop for frequently used items in bulk, whether from on-line wholesalers or through a warehouse store for which you are a member.

* Collaborate with a few different school parents to chip in for school supplies. Then one parent does the shopping and splits the supplies with the others.

* Keep a stockpile of supplies at home. They do not expire, and next year you may not have to shop at all.

* Having extra supplies on hand enables duplicate sets for at home and in school for consistency.

* Some parents like to buy many supplies and then donate some for underprivileged children. This time of year manufacturers or retailers could

actually donate a portion of school-supply proceeds to some educational organizations.

* Buying larger quantities of supplies could enable you to build up rewards points at certain retailers. This may entitle you to future coupons or dollar awards that can be put toward more expensive items, including tablets or graphing calculators.

* Contact the teacher and see if you can volunteer to buy all of the supplies in bulk for the entire class, with each student then paying the required amount. This will save many families time and effort.

* If you have a friend or family member who is a teacher, find out if he or she can purchase your school supplies. Often teachers are eligible for a discount on school supplies.

* Purchase bulk quantities of certain supplies and find out



It's the time of year to stock up on pencils, scissors and other school supplies. Purchasing in bulk could save you money.

if they can be sold as a fundraiser for the school. A portion of the sales will go to the PTA.

Buying school supplies in bulk can save money and pro-

vide an opportunity to give something back to the school community.



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How to find the right internship

Recent college grads have found the job market to be somewhat underwhelming. Gaining the attention of a prospective employer is never easy, and it's even less so when the economy is struggling.

One of the ways current students or even recent graduates can make themselves more attractive to prospective employers is to find the right internship. Internships are not always easy to get, and many of them don't pay. But students who find the right internship often look back and recognize that their internship was their first step toward a rewarding career, and a step that provided valuable insight into their chosen field. To find the right internship, consider the following tips.

* Work with your school. Whether you're in college or you're that rare high schooler looking for an internship, lean on your school for direction and advice. Colleges and universities have career centers that can help you gain an internship. They can assist you through access to job listings and by providing advice on crafting resumes and cover letters or tips on how to interview. In addition to your school's career center, speak to professors in your desired field and seek their advice. Many professors likely have experience in the field outside of the classroom and might even still work in the field, be it full-time or as a consultant. These professors can point you toward job opportunities or give you advice on what prospective employers are looking for from an intern.

* Start early. It's never too early to start looking for an internship. In fact, many companies hope to have their internship positions filled well in advance. For example, if you're looking for a summer internship, begin your search no later than January and continue that search throughout the semester.

In addition to starting early, don't just seek summer

internships. Some companies make internship opportunities available year-round, so you might be able to get one that coincides with the school year, even if you had a previous internship with a different company during the year. Internship experience is invaluable, and the more of it you can gain the more attractive you are likely to be to potential employers after graduation.

* Do your homework. Chances are you're working toward a degree in a specific field. Research the leading companies within that field and learn about their internship programs. Visit each company's Web site and peruse their job listings. This is more direct and takes less time than searching for internship opportunities on the large job listing Web sites. Such sites might have internship listings, but searching through them can feel like looking for a needle in a haystack.

* Do some networking. You might not have an expansive network of associates to tap into, but that does not mean you should go it alone. Talk to your parents to see if they or someone they know has heard about any internship opportunities in your chosen field. You might also be able to network via your school's career center, which likely has an alumni-networking service that enables you to contact past graduates currently working in your chosen field. In some instances, these alumni-networking services can be an internship gold mine, as past graduates might prefer to hire current students from their alma mater as opposed to applicants from other schools.

Competition for internships is often steep, and that's especially so when the economy is struggling and even recent graduates are hoping to land internships. But students can employ several strategies to find the right internships and take their first steps toward rewarding careers.



The best way to have a successful school year is to be safe in and outside of school. Start by following these important safety tips.

- Never go anywhere with a stranger.
- Don't walk anywhere alone. Always go with a buddy. Know your home address and phone number.
- Let your parents know if you go somewhere after school.
- Tell your parents or teachers if someone is bothering you.
- Don't run in the school hallways.
- Learn fire drill procedures at school and at home.
- Don't pet or bother unfamiliar animals.



Michele Courtney

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