

Grooming Savvy Shoppers

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We need to make a determined (and continued) effort to help our kids become smart and savvy shoppers. Kids are easily swayed in their shopping decisions — partly because advertisers, hoping to score big sales, target them heavily, and partly because kids have very little shopping experience.

Train your kids to be smart shoppers; this skill will serve them well their entire lives. The sooner your kids learn good shopping habits, the better they will do for themselves.



When To Do It

Ongoing

What To Do

1. Set good examples.
Our kids learn a lot more from what we do than from what we say. They watch every move we make, so it's important that we set a good example. How are your finances? Do you overspend? Is your way the one you want your kids to follow?

The holiday season can be an excellent time to talk to your kids about the limits you have set for your spending. Let them participate in the process of selecting gifts that meet your holiday budget. If they see you doing this now, they are much more likely to build the habit and keep it up as adults.

2. Model decision-making.
Let your kids hear your thought process when you make a purchase decision. Get in the habit of doing this — and if you don't always remember to, ask your kids to remind you the next time. Do it for the little items as well as your bigger purchases. Expose your kids to the full variety of strategies you use in deciding whether to buy, what to buy, and how much to spend.

Then, when your kids are in the throes of making a purchase decision of their own, ask them to take you through their thinking process — out loud. As they are learning, they may need you to remind them of helpful ways to think about purchase decision-making. Start with simple suggestions; as they get better, introduce more sophisticated ideas.

3. Let them fail.
It's far better that our kids learn early, through simple, low-risk mistakes, to be smarter shoppers. The consequences of buying a poorly made toy are low compared to the consequences they might suffer later from buying a poorly made car. The lesson they learn from spending a few bucks on a plastic action figure that doesn't stand up to energetic play will stick with them for a very long time.
4. Choose not to buy.
Kids can learn from your example when you actively choose not to buy something new and instead get creative in repurposing things you already own. Sometimes our best lessons lie in helping our kids notice the abundance already in their lives; we can demonstrate being a savvy shopper by choosing not to buy something new.

What You Will Need

- Time and Patience

Talk About It

Do your kids appreciate your help when you offer advice on making a purchase decision? Do you accept advice when your kids offer their input into your decision? Ask your kids to notice whether practice helps: does it get easier or harder or to choose between two items they really want (and can afford), or does it stay the same?