

How to get the most from a resale shopping experience

Here is a profile of a successful resale shopper: any person who loves a bargain, and enjoys taking the time to find it. A dedicated resale shopper loves to browse and will view every section of a resale shop to look for any kind of bargain that will enhance their home or wardrobe. They are also on the lookout for merchandise for their family and friends. They love the thrill of the hunt and they have the time and patience to follow this passion.

If you, on the other hand, are looking for a specific item and have limited time to shop; resale shopping is not for you. Most resale shops have only one of a kind or limited selections of merchandise. If you are looking for a red blouse, for example, you may not find one in your size. If you like to shop where there is a wide selection of colors in one style, then go to the department stores.

I have to tell you, shopping resale can give you a rush if you find that special, unique item that is just perfect for your living room or kitchen, especially when you paid far less than the original retail cost—and the item looks like it was never used. It is a myth that resale shops only carry used items! **Furniture resale shops have awesome bargains on expensive furniture.**

The same holds true for resale shops that carry designer fashions and accessories. **One of the best bargains can be found in bridal or formal wear.** Again, a surprising number of gowns can be found that were never worn for such reasons as the wedding was called off or the prom girl changed her mind after the purchase. A number of shops that carry this kind of merchandise also get new, end of season gowns from expensive boutiques. Expect to pay half or less of the original retail cost. It is not unusual to get the gown cleaned and returned as a consignment item.

And don't forget the shops for infant and children's clothing and furniture. I once spent \$400 at a resale shop to completely outfit my grandson's nursery and every item was brand new still in boxes. Even got some clothes, a high chair and a stroller.

Experienced resale shoppers know that it is best to visit their favorite shops frequently as new merchandise comes in daily. They get to know the owner and employees and become established as a "loyal" customer. That is when the fun really begins and the bargains start to flow. Loyal customers get on special mailing lists and may even receive phone calls about particular merchandise they are especially interested in.

Some resale shops are even smart enough to give you special discounts for your loyalty like the retail shops.

Wal-Mart shoppers want a large selection of functional stuff at "Always" low prices, and the advantage of long open hours. Resale shoppers regret the shorter hours to shop but are more satisfied with the quality and price ratio.

Check out www.resalehouston.com or the South Texas Association of Resale Shops website: www.starsresale.com for listings of some of the oldest and best resale/consignment furniture shops in Houston, as well as excellent shops for ladies, men and children's clothing and accessories. Our shops are to be found throughout Greater Houston and beyond.

by Pat Swartley

(Pat Swartley is the former owner of the Clothes Basket in Seabrook TX and past President and a founder of the 17 year old STARS organization.). She has also been honored with life membership in the National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops organization. www.narts.org

