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11 Useful English Shopping Vocabulary Words And How to Use Them

Americans love to shop.

More importantly, we love to *talk* about shopping.

Yesterday at work a co-worker said to me, “I love your coat. Where did you get it?”

Immediately, we began to talk about our favorite stores and next weekend’s sales—Americans love to share tips about sales, discounts and the best places to buy things.

Whether you’re talking to a good friend or someone new, it’s an easy way to start a casual conversation. So, next time someone asks you where you bought your shoes, make sure [you can continue the conversation](#) with these **shopping vocabulary words and expressions**.

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Essential English Shopping Vocabulary and Usage Examples for Smart Shoppers

American Shopping Traditions

When Americans talk about shopping, there are some events and places you may need to know more about. We have several shopping customs that may not exist in your country.

1. Black Friday



Every year, the day after Thanksgiving is the unofficial beginning of Christmas season. So, on the Friday after Thanksgiving, also called **Black Friday**, Americans begin their Christmas shopping. Almost every store has a huge sale (online and in the store), and many open early.

It's not an official holiday, but since many Americans have the Friday after Thanksgiving off, you'll see lots of people in malls and stores buying cheap gifts for their friends and family.

2. Outlet mall



An **outlet mall** is similar to a mall, but they're not the same thing. Both have many stores in one location. At both you can buy a t-shirt from the Gap, then look at watches in Swatch.

However, there is one important difference: an outlet mall sells everything at a reduced price. Many of them are large and outdoors, and Americans will often spend a full day walking around outlet malls and looking for discounts. It's a great place to look for sales.

3. Yard sale / garage sale



As you drive around America in the spring or summer, you'll see large signs that say "Yard Sale" or "Garage Sale." This is when people sell their old clothes, furniture and other items in front of their houses—in their yards or garages.

These sales are great places to find cheap used goods. Interestingly enough, it's also one of the only times you can **bargain** in America. What does "to bargain" mean? Read on!

English Vocabulary for Talking about Cheap Prices

4. To Bargain (verb)



In many countries, you can **bargain** in stores and markets. You can ask a seller if it's OK to pay less for an item you want.

This is not usually OK in America—except at yard sales. So, if you see a t-shirt for \$4 at a yard sale, you can ask for a lower price and **bargain** with the person selling stuff. For example:

You: “This t-shirt costs 4 dollars, will you sell it for two?”

Seller: “How about three dollars?”

You: “Sure.”

5. “What a bargain!”

If you buy something for much less than normal, you can call that a bargain. You may also hear people say “what a bargain!” if you later tell someone you bought an item at a low price.

For example, maybe [you're ordering food](#) and the menu says you can buy two hamburgers for \$8. Normally it's \$14 for two. What a bargain!

Or maybe, you found a new phone on sale on Black Friday. It normally costs \$150, but you paid \$70. **What a bargain!**

Later, your best friend, Jackie, sees you using your new phone:

Jackie: “Is that a new phone? How much did it cost?”

You: “Only \$70. It was originally \$150.”

Jackie: “Wow! What a bargain!”

6. “A steal”



It’s wrong to steal—to take something without paying for it. But if someone tells you their new dress was “a steal,” that’s a very good thing!

That means they did not pay much for it. They paid so little that it almost felt like stealing. Actually, the meaning of “a steal” is similar to “a bargain.”

For example:

Jackie: “Look! This dress is only \$10.”

You: “That’s so cheap. That dress is a steal! You should buy it.”

7. “A good deal”

Similar to “a steal” and “a bargain,” if something is a good deal, you paid a low price. However, “a good deal” describes the *price* not the object or item. If you want to use it to describe an object or item, you need to say “a good deal on [noun].” For example:

Incorrect: “My car was a good deal.”

Correct: “I got a good deal on my car.”

So, if Jackie is telling you about the car her sister bought, you might have one of these conversations:

You: “Your sister bought a new car? How much did she pay?”

Jackie: “She got a good deal. She only paid \$5,000.”

You: “How much did your sister pay for her new car?”

Jackie: “She paid \$5,000.”

You: “That’s a really good deal.”

You: “Was your sister’s car expensive?”

Jackie: “No, she got a good deal on her car. It was only \$5,000.”

8. 50% off / \$10 off



If a store is having a sale, many of their items will cost less than normal. This is called a discount. Usually you’ll see signs like:

50% off: The price is now 50% less than it was originally.

For example, a \$200 sofa is now \$100.

\$10 off: You'll pay \$10 less than the original price.

For example, a \$200 sofa is now \$190.

10% off sale price: Sometimes, you can receive an additional discount on sale items.

For example, a \$200 sofa is on sale for \$150 with an additional 10% off. You'll pay \$135. Awesome!

Now, if you want to tell Jackie about the new sofa you bought you can tell her:

- "The sofa was 10% off."
- "I got 10% off my sofa."
- "The sofa was on sale for 10% off."

All of these things mean the same thing: *your new sofa was a bargain!*

English Vocabulary for Talking about Expensive Prices

Not everything you buy is a good deal. Sometimes, you may pay too much or you may feel like you're paying too much. Here are some expressions you may hear when that new shirt is just a *little* too expensive!

9. Overpriced



I like to go to two supermarkets to buy my food: Safeway and Whole Foods. At Safeway, the food is usually less expensive, but at Whole Foods they have more organic and healthy food.

Sometimes, I will see the exact same box of strawberries in both supermarkets, but they're different prices. At Safeway the box of strawberries costs \$2.50 but at Whole Foods the same box of strawberries costs \$4.

When a store wants you to pay too much for something, that thing is **overpriced**. At Whole Foods, their strawberries are overpriced! If I want to save money, I'll go to Safeway to find a good deal on strawberries.

More examples:

- Don't buy that couch here, it's way **overpriced**. I think you can find a cheaper couch elsewhere.
- Groceries at Whole Foods are kind of **overpriced**. You can find the same things at Safeway and they cost less.

- I like this **winter coat**, but it's **overpriced**. I saw the same coat somewhere else and it was 50% off.
- The food at the new Italian restaurant is good but **overpriced**. There's a pizza place nearby that has the same quality food for half the price.

10. A rip off

Sometimes, your strawberries are overpriced. Other times, they're *really* overpriced. \$10 for strawberries?!? Wow!

If you think a price for something is so expensive that it's unfair, you can call that **a rip off**.

Generally, when we call something a rip off, we feel like someone is cheating us and we are angry about it. For example:

- Designer t-shirts are **a rip off**. Who wants to pay \$90 for a simple t-shirt?
- Airplane fees are such **a rip off**. I shouldn't have to pay to check my suitcase!

You can also use "rip off" as a verb. If a person makes you pay too much for something, you can say that person ripped you off. For example:

- The taxi ride should have cost \$10, but the driver **ripped me off**. He charged me \$20!
- I tried to bargain for this souvenir, but I still think I paid too much. The vendor definitely **ripped me off**.
- Really? You paid \$50 for a pair of fake sunglasses? That shop **ripped you off**!

Grammar note: If you use "to rip off" as a verb, the object comes between rip and off. So, he ripped **her** off. They ripped **you** off.

11. Stingy



It's not always the store that charges too much. Sometimes, the price is fair but you don't want to spend much money.

If you're unwilling to spend money—even when you *should* spend money—you're stingy. Stingy is the opposite of generous.

For example:

- Don't be **stingy**. You should spend more than \$5 on your mom's birthday gift.
- My new boyfriend is so **stingy**—he never gives enough for tip at restaurants.
- I don't want to be **stingy** on this vacation. I want to go out to nice restaurants and stay in a comfortable hotel.

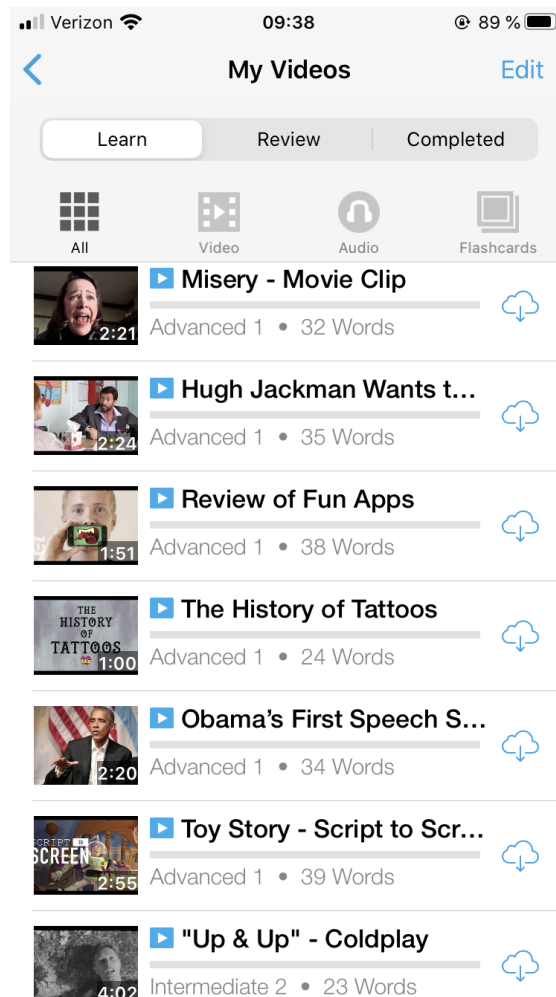
So, Where Did You Get Those New Shoes?

Next time you ask your friends about their new shoes, you'll know exactly what to say.

Ask them where they bought them, and when they tell you how much they spent we hope you'll say "what a bargain!" and not "what a rip off!"

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