

Grab the best buys this January

Shopping may be the last thing on the average person's mind once the holiday season has ended. But January may be a great time to go bargain hunting.

Though sinking January temperatures can make winter seem endless, retailers already have spring on their minds when the calendar turns, and many use the first month of the year to clear out inventory and make room for spring merchandise. If you're ready to shop, the following items might be available at heavy discounts.

• **Winter clothing:** January can be a great time to get discounts on winter apparel. Sweaters and coats have been on display since September, and stores are ready to start displaying their spring collections. Use that accumulated Christmas cash to stock up on coats, sweatshirts and even snow boots.

• **Exercise equipment:** Many people resolve to get in shape come the new year, so it comes as no surprise that fitness gear and equipment is on sale in January. Look for deals on home gym equipment, workout wear and items for winter sports. If you are in the market for a

gym membership, health clubs typically offer discounted fees and incentives to join in the first month of the year.

• **Home furnishings:** Several manufacturers release new furniture collections in February, and retailers must clean out their old inventory beforehand. If you are in the market for big-ticket home furnishings, hold off until after the holidays and your patience may just be rewarded with considerable savings.

• **Holiday items:** Now is the time to stock up on holiday décor as retailers reorganize for Valentine's Day and spring holidays. Take inventory of any decorations that broke during the season as well as anything you are thinking of replacing. Purchase cards, wrapping paper and other holiday items now and pack them away until next year.

• **Vehicles:** January and February can be ideal times to find discounts on both new and preowned vehicles. Drivers may not want to drive new vehicles through messy winter conditions, so they will usually wait to buy until spring. Dealerships recognize this and will drop prices on vehicles during the winter to try to entice shoppers to buy. You

might find it easier to negotiate a better deal in January and February than you would later in the year when demand is higher.

• **Big-ticket electronics:** January is traditionally one of the best months to buy electronics because this time of year is when the Consumer Electronics Show unveils the newest technology. As people upgrade to new models and systems, last year's merchandise is put on sale. Sports fans also may want to upgrade the size of their televisions now so come February they can watch the Super Bowl in style.

• **Jewelry:** January is slow for jewelry retailers, and that lull can be ad-

vantageous to buyers shopping in January. Splurge on jewelry now before prices spike for Valentine's Day.

Bargain hunting consumers may want to brave the winter weather and shop till they drop this January, when retailers may be looking to unload inventory as they prepare for the spring shopping season.





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