

BECOME A MYSTERY SHOPPER



HOW TO GET PAID TO SHOP

The Definite Guide

Expanded Edition

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To shop or not to shop

All of us do it. Some of us are fast and some slow. Some days you'll do it indoors, other days outside. It can be done locally in your neighborhood, at malls, department stores, on cruise ships, at theme parks, and even in other countries. Actually, it can be done almost anywhere! You can do it alone or with a friend, husband or wife, your children or your neighbors. Sometimes you'll spend the whole day doing it.

There's nothing to worry about. Relax and enjoy where you are. Break for lunch and then continue with the rest of your day filled with pleasant experiences.

Not too many other activities offer the rewards that shopping has to offer. Where else can you wander through beautifully decorated walkways, with marble floors, chandeliers and the sounds of sweet music echoing lightly in the background. Exquisitely decorated areas are everywhere your eye looks. Perfectly trimmed plants and blooming flowers give a hint of ambrosial aromatic pleasure. Friendly salespeople are available to grant your every wish.

Modern day malls and department stores are the next best thing to paradise. Hundreds of stores in your area are available every day of the week for your total enjoyment.

Until now, you might have thought that spending a day shopping would mean spending lots of your hard-earned money. On the contrary, I'm here to show you a new way to discover all the benefits that malls, department stores and retail outlets can offer you without spending any of your money!

Story Behind "Mystery Shopping"

Do you remember ever taking a road trip across the nation or even across a single state? One thing you probably noticed as you drove through each area are the unmistakable McDonald's Golden Arches. It seems no matter where you are... you can always find them! You could even be in one of the smaller towns in Indiana, and you will most probably come across a pair of those famous Golden Arches. With more than 8,000 locations in the United States alone, it's easy to see why you're going to notice a McDonald's in nearly every town, city, or suburb.

I am quite sure at some time during your travels you have stopped at a McDonald's to get something to eat at least once. Let's face it, you know that a McDonald's will have that Quarter Pounder, cola and French fries you've been thinking about all afternoon. It's guaranteed. You also know that when you enter, it will be only a matter of a few minutes to get your meal. Also, you'll know the atmosphere will be casual, and will give you a place to relax.

The reason that you made that final decision to stop at McDonald's is not because you were in search of something new, but simply that you knew what to expect. Wherever you may travel, whether it is a McDonald's in Iowa, Oregon, Alaska, or a small town in Oklahoma, you can count on the food, service and atmosphere to all be pretty much the same.

Just think about it. You can find a meal cooked exactly the same, in every part of the country. That is certainly not easy to come by. The only way is if the restaurant sends a representative from McDonald's Corporate Headquarters to each of these locations every single day to make sure that the cooks prepare each meal in the exact same manner. So, how does the food turn out almost exactly the same in each location?

The answer is really quite simple. Stores and restaurants that have many or even thousands of different locations rely on "Mystery Shoppers" all over the country, to check every location. By having an ordinary customer go to each store and report back to the corporate offices on the service, cleanliness and product or food quality, they can guarantee the same consistency at every store. Mystery Shoppers provide a very valuable information source for Corporate Headquarters about all of their stores. Since the "Mystery Shoppers" are working 'undercover', the salespeople at the store will treat them like normal customers. The "Mystery Shoppers" will not be treated any different than another customer. In this way, "Mystery Shoppers" can provide an unbiased assessment of their shopping experience. That report will be used by the Corporate Headquarters or management to help to improve the quality of their programs and to promote better service throughout the chain. You, as a "Mystery Shopper", will be providing this valuable information and you will get paid very well for it!

Thousands of stores use "Mystery Shoppers". The vast majority of them are either service oriented or have many locations. More often than not, "Mystery Shoppers" are used in department stores, clothing stores, electronic and video stores, fast-food establishments, banks, auto repair shops, and hardware stores. Most retailers that consider their customer service a vital asset to financial success are likely candidates for "Mystery Shoppers."

National chains and franchises consistently provide a very large market for Mystery Shopping. These big businesses have one thing in common. They have a single Corporate Headquarters which has to try to keep track of how well each of their stores are performing. You might think to yourself, how can one Corporate Headquarters possibly keep abreast of their different stores all over the country?

Well, many of them do have Regional Offices which oversee a certain geographical area, such as their east coast stores. There also might be a District Manager who will oversee all of the stores within one state. Finally, in each store there may be a store manager who oversees that one location. Last, but certainly not least, are the employees at each location.

That can certainly be a lot to keep track of! As you can plainly see, services can vary greatly from store to store. There is no system for the Corporate Headquarters to review for themselves exactly what is going on at each store. If the Corporate office wants to implement new policies of each employee saying: "Come back and see us again real soon!" to each customer, by the time the message gets relayed from headquarters to each and every store, it may be changed dramatically.

This is very similar to the popular children's game - "telephone". Maybe you played it when you were younger. It goes something like this. A group of children sit in a circle. One of them decides to be the start person. Let's say Sally is the start person. First, Sally thinks of a phrase and whispers it (so no one else can hear her) to the person sitting on her left.

Maybe her phrase is: "I like to eat candy every day." Sounds simple enough. But, when she whispers it into Fred's ear, what he hears is: "My bike eats candy every day." So he whispers that into Mary's ear, but she doesn't quite hear the entire thing. It keeps going until the last person says it out loud. In this case, Steve was the last person and this is what he said he heard "Flying bikes eat candy if they pay."

It can be easy to see, if it's this difficult to relay information to the person right next to you, think how twisted a new policy might get by the time it reaches each employee at every store.

"Mystery Shoppers" help to provide a communication link between a Corporate Headquarters and all of their stores. In this way, without going to each location, Corporate can find out precisely how clean their stores are, how good the service is, and they can find out how well customers are treated. You see, big companies with several or hundreds of locations across the country rely on "Mystery Shoppers" to go and visit each of their locations.

The customers are the most important decision makers connected with the companies. Mystery Shoppers provide a communications link between store and Corporate headquarters. By describing their experiences at a store with as much detail as they can possibly remember, they give Corporate, who may be located thousands of miles away, a much clearer picture of the operation of that store. Without "Mystery Shoppers", Corporate headquarters would never get a real perspective on what goes on at each store on a daily basis. Once Corporate knows what's going wrong at one store, they can then implement systems to make sure that each of their stores are operated consistently.

The Corporate Headquarters and management of a big company have many responsibilities of their own, as you can imagine. They don't have time to think about each and every detail and cannot keep track of what's happening at each of their stores. It is very rare when an owner even has the chance to travel to any of his stores for a quick inspection.

And when he or she does, you can bet that the entire store and all of its employees are well aware of his arrival. They may spend days preparing for his inspection. They may work overtime cleaning the entire store getting it in the best condition. When the big day arrives and the owner walks through the front door, every employee will surely be on his or her best behavior.

There are problems with this type of inspection. If the owner is the only one who gets the royal treatment and all the employees know that he's coming, what happens when you or I, the average "Joe", walk through the door. Do we get the same treatment? Not likely. Are the employees on their worst behavior? Probably not. Is the store a mess? Unlikely. As you can see there's an tremendous need for "Mystery Shoppers". They report on how a normal customer gets treated, in an everyday situation.

Mystery Shoppers are not hired to spy on employees or stores. They do not inspect every detail, look for things to correct or try to catch someone. They don't really look for anything that is correct either. They take into account procedures and events as they are and later on they write a brief summation of what happened during their shopping trip.

After the owner of the store reads these summaries, he will finally know what is REALLY going on at each of his stores. He will gain an insight to how the average "Joe" customer feels when they shop and also how they are treated. "Mystery Shoppers" play a very important part in the success of stores. Without them, thousands of owners would be in the dark and maybe losing money faster than they could ever dream. Without the help of Mystery Shoppers, they might lose millions of dollars each year. "Mystery Shoppers" are a vital, contributing factor in today's retail stores.

What is Mystery Shopping?

At this time customer service is all important. Customers today simply will not tolerate bad service like they did in the past. People are too busy to tolerate slow or poor service. Nowadays, people want it right, and they want it now! If the service and products are not perfect, the customers will go to another store instantly.

For retail outlets, opinions of their business are formed by consumer experience with the store staff. When the workers are courteous, helpful and knowledgeable salespeople they will make a lasting impression and draw loyal, satisfied customers. In fact, it can help to measure the quality of the services offered as well as evaluate staff sales skills and knowledge of product.

"Mystery Shoppers" often visit designated retail stores as an average customer and complete confidential reports relative to customer service skills, knowledge of the product, and sales skills. A "Mystery Shopper" report assists an owner in pinpointing specific strengths and weaknesses in daily operational practices at the retail level. The objective of Mystery Shopping is to provide management the opportunity to evaluate training and operational programs.

Professional "Mystery Shoppers" get to test new products, monitor register transactions, check operations, observe a stores security procedures, evaluate the effectiveness of advertising and other marketing efforts.

As a "Mystery Shopper" you will pose as an anonymous customer. You carefully follow the avenue of a sales transaction as a normal customer. You will be able to quickly and efficiently identify theft on the part of sales personnel and cashiers. Shoppers frequently reveal weaknesses in systems and procedures which may encourage employees to be dishonest.

In today's economy, companies spend millions of dollars to attract, motivate and establish customer preferences, but the actual sale of a product or service most often depends on the personal experience of the consumer at the retail level. Getting the information on this last important link is vital to a company's success.

"Mystery Shopping" is a fun type of work in which you act like a customer in order to acquire certain information for the particular company that hired you . The information usually consists of how the employees acted. Were they friendly? Did they ask if you needed help to find anything? Was the location clean, and were the various products offered of good quality? The information the company gets from "Mystery Shopping" is normally used as part of an all inclusive program to enhance employee performance. The information "Mystery Shoppers" gather is very valuable to the company using it.

Benefits of Mystery Shopping For Secret Shoppers

Mystery shoppers are people who are hired to scrutinize employees, products and customer services of any organization. The benefits that they get from mystery shopping are:

They enjoy doing a job that's fun and frolic.

Mystery shoppers shop because they enjoy doing that. Mystery shoppers visit not just the stores but the restaurants and hotels too. They are supposed to evaluate products like food, drinks, spa and gym. It's obvious that they have to use the products in order to assess them. They get their money that they had spent on eating, back. To top it all they get some bucks for doing this job. Quite often, they get free meals in restaurants and free stay in hotel suites. This is really "hitting two birds with one stone."

Acting attracts them

Acting gives them an all time high. They even get paid for it. What more could they ask for? They get to shop in the department stores with the hidden camera. They pretend to buy stuffs and simultaneously catch the persuasive talks of the salesmen on camera. Sometimes they even color their hair and shave their beard or mustache to mingle with the shoppers. They do such funny and adventurous things to conceal their identity.

They can get engaged in secret shopping at any point of time

Mystery shopping is open for people of all age and category like, retired persons, home makers or the professionals. The technological and economical developments have brought mystery shopping in forefront. Ex-employees of airlines, banks etc. too work for mystery shopping companies. This profession is good especially for those people who have been badly-placed in their full time jobs or are dissatisfied with their jobs. Mystery shopping is a good means of earning for such people. There are various mystery shopping companies that register people to be mystery shoppers, online. Some people get registered with 10 companies, whereas there are others who get registered with few that offer interesting jobs like cruising and visiting nightclubs.

They make good money

Different companies pay differently to the secret shoppers. Money earned, actually depends on the nature of the job. For example, a shopper can get somewhere near \$8 for accomplishing small assignments like banks while for more sophisticated jobs they get \$25 or more. The working efficiency of a person too determines his earnings as a mystery shopper. There are shoppers who make about \$100 by working back-to-back in a day. A mystery shopper initially begins with as little as \$5 per job. Hard work and sincerity enable him to earn hundreds of dollars a month and he grows as a professional. It is assumed that as mystery shopping gains popularity both mystery shoppers and the companies will make big money in the coming years.

The task is sometimes very simple and easy to accomplish

Sometimes these shoppers are required to do simple tasks of assessing the drive-in tellers. Secret shoppers observe their welcoming style, whether or not they chew gums and the time taken by them for delivery. This is why secret shoppers carry useful stuffs like stop or digital watch. Mystery shoppers answer some queries in the form provided to them by their employers at the end of their scrutiny. They send it back to the mystery shopping company and from there it is sent to the actual client.

Future prospects are good

As the mystery shopping business is growing, shoppers are always on their toes. They have to log-in on websites in time otherwise they might lose some opportunities, to shop, and their competitors might win. The scope for being a mystery shopper is vast as companies don't repeat a shopper for the same job at the same place. They always hire fresh faces. The craze for being a mystery shopper is such that some companies get calls very frequently from enthusiast who want to be mystery shoppers. Mystery shopping companies serve clients in many countries and employ about thousands of shoppers. This provides opportunities for large number of aspirants who look forward to work as secret shoppers.

How to avoid Mystery Shopping Drawbacks and Scams

Mystery shopping is a fun filled job but there is a negative side to it too. There are many drawbacks of mystery shopping. They are as follows:

- ✓ The biggest drawback is that people can charge you for providing any service related to finding a job as mystery shopper. These service providers can cheat you by offering jobs on contract basis for months or years and charge you heavily for that. There is no guaranty that on paying the fees you would get a job for longer period. The employer is supposed to pay for the amount for work. If an employee is paying to get a job, it means something is wrong some where. Mystery shoppers are taken for a ride.
- ✓ Luring mystery shoppers by promising them to give free TV and other such objects of luxury is also one of the traps, which enthusiastic aspirants fall prey to.
- ✓ Some companies can ask for personal details like credit card number or even bank account number.
- ✓ Others may even ask you to part with some bucks to pay for the secret list.
- ✓ While some others may claim to provide mystery shopping certificate to get you a job which is never true.
- ✓ Some mystery shopping resources on Internet provide fake phone numbers and out of order websites.
- ✓ None of the companies provide serious help in finding a job.
- ✓ There is no scope for refund of money spent on these fake mystery shopping companies.
- ✓ Some of these fake companies provide poor web pages that can hardly be read.
- ✓ Mystery shoppers often use hidden cameras, which is sometimes risky. It can create havoc if the mystery shopper is not an honest person. The mystery shopper can misuse it to invade employee privacy and later blackmail them.
- ✓ The reports provided by the mystery shoppers are not always accurate. They are sometimes their own personal opinions or suggestions to improve the prevailing conditions of a store.
- ✓ If the mystery shopper is a kind of person who is sensitive and emotional then he or she may end up with the guilt of lying to someone as he or she would be faking while shopping. It can ruin his or her mental peace.

Ways To Stay Away From The Scams

The pace with which the technology is improving day by day, it is giving birth to equal number of ways by which fake online mystery shopping companies cheat people. But there are some features that would enable a mystery shopper to distinguish the right companies from the wrong ones and stay from scams. These features are:

- ✓ If there is no affiliated contact number then probably the website is a fake. If the contact number provided is toll free then it means that the website is genuine. Although it's not always necessary that in the absence of a contact number the website is fake.
- ✓ If a contact email is provided without a website then it is a sign that the company is a fake as a genuine company would always put-in some effort and time in planning its website and program. It is not always necessary that if a website is provided then the company is genuine. However, absence of it surely states that it is a fake, so be alert.
- ✓ If there is no description of the product and the site just boasts of making big bucks then definitely the company is deceiving you.
- ✓ If the online company asks you to pay some fees at the time of participation then avoid that company. It is for sure that company is there to make money out of nothing.
- ✓ Always browse the Internet properly to check for the authenticity of the company. Search for people's opinion on that particular company on net. Never rely on the testimonials provided by the company as the proof of their genuineness.

Shopping Adventures

Every one of the "Mystery Shopping" jobs you perform will be a new and exciting experience. From this point on I will refer to these various jobs as Shopping Adventures. When you hear the word job, the first thing that comes to your mind is probably work, and "Getting Paid to Shop" is anything but work! It's fun. It can also be rewarding, challenging, and an all out adventure. Of course it's not like skiing your way down a steep hill, but in many ways it can be just as adventurous.

What other opportunities can you think of where you get paid for doing something you already like to do? Plus, you get to keep merchandise you buy for free! It's the Ultimate Dream Job.

"Mystery Shopping" is not hard to do. Anyone who has a little common sense and is neat in appearance can do it. Usually a Shopping Adventure begins with a Business Representative calling you on the phone and asking if you would like to shop at a certain store. The list of businesses who pay their people to shop are included in this manual. All that you have to do is contact them and let them know that you are available to shop in your local area.

They will then contact you with regard to upcoming Shopping Adventures, either via the telephone or a letter. If you are serious about making a lot of money shopping, you might want to think about getting an answering machine . That way, if you are away from your telephone, the businesses can leave a message about upcoming Shopping Adventures. All businesses will leave messages for you on an answering machine for you to return their call.

When you talk to a business representative, they will ask if you can be available at a particular store. They will give you a time frame in which you must go on that Shopping Adventure. He or she will also ask you the distance from your home to the Shopping Adventure is acceptable. Sometimes they might ask you if you have any friends or family working at the store being shopped at. This is because they wouldn't want you to be prejudiced against that store for any reason. They may also ask you a few more questions.

The Businesses that contact you will usually let you pick the time and day of the week that you would like to go on a particular Shopping Adventure, just as long as it is within the time frame that they have allowed. Because of the flexibility that Mystery Shopping offers in schedules, it is an absolutely perfect way to make lots of extra cash and also get free gifts. If you are busy on one day and cannot go on a Shopping Adventure, that's O.K. You may decide when you get paid to shop! On some occasions you may be required to go on a Shopping Adventure at a specified time.

After you have accepted a Shopping Adventure, the business will send you a Shopping Form and instructions that are needed for that particular Shopping Adventure. The Shopping Form will have various questions for you to fill in after you have completed your Shopping Adventure. The Shopping Forms that Businesses send you are all spelled out in detail and you are always encouraged to call the business if you ever have any questions .

The "Shopping Form" is used to explain how you felt as customer when you shopped at a particular store. A typical "Shopping Adventure" at a department store or other

retail store usually focuses on the performance of the salesperson who helped you. Most often you will be asked to report on how long it took the employee to greet you and if the service was good.

These forms are not complicated. They have easy questions like: Did the salesperson greet you when you walked into the store? Were the products all arranged neatly on the display racks?

At the end of most Shopping Forms is a space for you to write down a short summation of your entire Shopping Adventure. You don't have to write a lot, just a few short paragraphs telling what transpired when you went shopping.

Before you leave to go on your Shopping Adventure try to be sure that you read the Shopping Form ahead of time. It will help to give you an idea of what you are to check for while shopping. This will make it much easier to remember what happened after you have left the store. You should never take your Shopping Form into a store location and fill it out inside. This will instantly identify you as a Mystery Shopper. Be sure you wait until you get into your car or back to your home. Then, fill out the form right away before you forget your shopping experience.

Also, before you get into your car and start driving to a Shopping Adventure, make certain that you know exactly how to get to the store. Most of the time you will be getting paid to shop in your local area. You may, however, accept an Adventure that's in a neighboring city and if you are not familiar with it, look on a map to find out the exact location. If you are required to shop at a precise time be sure to allow yourself plenty of time to arrive early.

In any given week, you may be sent to a variety of different stores. A department store, a bank, a hair salon, a flower shop and more. The opportunity to shop for various stores is virtually unlimited! For each Shopping Adventure that you accept, you will receive a new Shopping Form to fill out. That means the questions that you fill out will be different.

You should fill out each of the forms as completely as you can, using a neat print or a typewriter. You will be given a certain "due date" by which time your Shopping Form must be filled out and returned to the Business. You should never return your forms back to the store that you shopped for. Always mail it to the Business that hired you.

If you don't think you can fully remember your Shopping Adventures until the time that you get home (to fill out your form), you might want to invest in a mini-cassette recorder. That way, when you leave the store and get into your car, you can record what happened while it is still fresh in your mind. Later on that day you can fill out your Shopping Form while listening to your recorder.

Success Tips

1. Read over your Shopping Form and set of instructions carefully before you go to each new Shopping Adventure.
2. When you are given a certain time frame in which your Shopping Adventure must take place, be sure to arrive at that location on time.
3. Fill out your Shopping Forms as completely as possible. Print legibly. Review your form before you turn it in just to double check for errors and also that you have filled it out accurately.
4. After filling out your Shopping Form, make a photocopy for yourself, just in case the Business calls you with more questions about your shopping trip.
5. Do not take young children along on certain Shopping Adventures where they may become a distraction to you. Remember, you are working and getting paid for it. Always take your Mystery Shopping seriously and act professionally.
6. While visiting a store, don't attempt to stand out from the crowd. Dress the same way that you think everyone else who will be shopping there will be dressed. Always act like another ordinary customer. Your goal is to experience a normal shopping visit at each store that you visit. Don't do anything out of the ordinary to call attention to yourself as you conduct business with a store's employees.
7. You don't have to look for things that are wrong. Don't try and deliberately harass employees to get them upset. Mystery Shoppers are supposed to give the view point of how the average customer is being treated in a store, not how rude people are dealt with.
8. If you shop at the same store more than once, each time that you go back, act as if it is your first time as a customer. Otherwise the employees may catch on to the fact that you're a Mystery Shopper. Don't analyze every move the salespeople may make. More importantly, just shop as you normally would.
9. When you are filling out your Shopping Form, try not to use words that are demeaning or have racial overtones when you are describing an employee. For instance, if you are writing down a particular race use: White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, etc. For gender, use Male or Female.
10. Always keep your "Shopping Forms" confidential. Don't show anyone, and certainly don't ever give or sell your form to a store's competition. Take pride in being a "Mystery Shopper". What you do is extremely important. Feel good about yourself. Have respect for the Businesses who pay you to shop and the stores you shop at.
11. Don't act like an inspector, looking into, under, around and behind everything. Shop like you would normally.
12. Be neutral. Don't act over friendly or unfriendly. Don't start up unnecessary conversations with salespeople. The less attention you draw to yourself the better you will be. Just try to fit in and be one of the crowd. Try to give the salesperson an

opportunity to be friendly, but don't try to force it. Your Shopping Form should report how employees behave in normal selling situations.

Dos And Don'ts Of Mystery Shopping

In order to be a good mystery shopper you need to do certain things while at the same time avoid others. Following is a checklist of dos and don'ts of mystery shopping:

Things to do

- ✓ Read and do your research well. Learn the facts and figures of mystery shopping business.
- ✓ Inquire about the returns that you would be getting, the date of shop and whether or not there would be any out of pocket expenses.
- ✓ Get registered with a mystery shopping company of good repute that trains shoppers and is popular among other shoppers and clients.
- ✓ Always give prior notice to the mystery shopping company in case of crisis so that the company can find a suitable replacement. Crisis here means a situation when you are unable to complete the shop due to some reason.
- ✓ Check the instructions that would be provided to you by the shopping company. Understand them well and then follow them to perform exactly the way the company wants you to.
- ✓ While filling the report be precise in your answers. Answer the question to the point. Read it well, to discard all the mistakes, before submitting.
- ✓ Give your opinion only when you are asked to, otherwise just report the real happenings and facts.
- ✓ Always visit the store, in the rush hour, for your scrutiny. When the store is not filled with customers it is likely that the salesmen would have enough time to present themselves perfectly and would be polite. They would reveal their true self only when they have too many customers to attend to. It would be better to carry out the survey during both these hours for best results.
- ✓ Prepare yourself well according to the different types of customers that visit stores in urban and rural areas. You must know the likes and dislikes of people living in small towns and in big cities, because then accordingly you can put your questions to the salesmen. The judgment would then be appropriate.
- ✓ A true mystery shopper should not bring his mood and personality to the store at the time of scrutiny otherwise the findings will get distorted. You should also keep in mind your age while choosing a shop. For example, if you are very old you should never go to the store to buy stuffs like surfboard.
- ✓ As you would just be pretending to be a shopper you might not know the real needs of a customer. It is advisable to compare your findings with the feedback from the real customer.
- ✓ Record all the necessary facts like whether there was enough stock of goods and the price of the product. Don't waste time in scrutinizing things like cleanliness and ambiance etc., unless asked.

Things to avoid

- x Avoid those companies that boast of making profits and do not train the mystery shoppers.
- x Ignore undesirable e-mails claiming to provide jobs that can be accomplished from home itself.
- x Never pay money for training and recruitment of mystery shoppers.

- x Never take up a job that you think you will not be able to finish. Do not betray your employer.
- x Never make silly excuses for unaccomplished tasks. Mystery shopping companies keep in touch with each other. Someone might spill the beans and you may end up not finding a shopper's job at all.
- x Never discuss the fees with the employer after accepting the shop. Negotiate it prior to finalizing the deal. It is an unprofessional attitude.
- x Never embellish your report in order to impress the clients. Stick to the facts.
- x Never carry your forms to the store especially when you have taken up more than one shop. You might make a mess of the reports. Fill them while on your way back or at home.
- x Avoid being caught while you are secretly shopping.

Shopping Summary

While you are writing the summary of your Shopping Adventure, try to mentally walk through the entire shopping experience as you have just lived it. Write your report as if you were telling the experience to a friend. Include any relevant details that stand out. For example, if you walked into the store and noticed that there was water on the floor, because it had just been mopped but there were no warning signs, write that down.

It is not necessary for you to write your summary like an English teacher. Use simple, easily understood language. Avoid using terms like: "Man, my experience at Hank's Hardware was totally awesome! I got this rad tool kit." Instead, you might say: "My experience at Hanks Hardware was quite pleasant. The salespeople were genuinely friendly and I bought a very high quality tool kit."

If you fill out your form with many uncommon words, the business person who reviews it will have to spend a lot of time trying to evaluate what you mean rather than concentrating on what you are saying.

Be accurate and truthful. If you didn't like a salesperson's hairstyle, it is not necessary to include that in your form. Write down only the facts, not your own personal preferences. You should include your opinions on service, product quality, and overall store cleanliness.

Getting Paid as a Mystery Shopper

In the not too recent past the service area of our nations economy has greatly increased, creating a demand for Mystery Shoppers. When a store or chain of businesses want Mystery Shoppers, they invariably seek a Market Research Firm in which to provide them. The businesses you will be in contact with in this "Mystery Shoppers Package" are mostly Marketing Research firms who have contracts with hundreds of stores across the United States.

As a Mystery Shopper, you will work in conjunction with these Businesses on a contract basis. This means that you are not their "employee", but rather an independent Mystery Shopper. You will be held responsible for your own income taxes on your earnings and no deductions will be taken out of your paycheck. Most people like this, because it allows them to take advantage of numerous tax breaks. As an Independent Mystery Shopper you can take advantage of tax breaks involving the use of your home as a place of work and also certain tax breaks involving the use of your car.

Making Money

Now that you know how to Mystery Shop, the most important question you have might be about how much money you can make. If you refer to the list of businesses included with this booklet you will easily see that they are located in different geographic areas of the country. Some of them only have Mystery Shopping Adventures available in certain regions or states. Others are national.

When you let these businesses know that you are available to Mystery Shop, they will send you the details. After you have sent your paper work to them, they will contact you to Mystery Shop. When they do, some businesses will ask you to give them a fee that you feel you need to get paid for doing a particular Shopping Adventure. To figure out the fee you'd like to get paid, consider such things as mileage (standard mileage is around 18c per mile after the first 10 miles), how long it will take you to do the shopping, and any authorized purchases or expenses that you may incur while completing the Shopping Adventure.

The average shopping fee is about \$20 per hour. This does not include mileage or any other expenses. Feel free to quote what you feel is an appropriate price for the type of Shopping Adventure you will be doing. A typical shopper may propose a shopping fee for 20 stores in a franchise, approximately 25 hours of shopping and report writing, and quote a business \$600! This would include all the costs, mileage, expenses, and shopping fees.

Some mystery shoppers fulfill the larger contracts, while others fulfill the small contracts. You may work the hours that you wish and do the work whenever you prefer. You might want to shop at your local book store, receive a flower arrangement, visit a fast-food restaurant, and get your car washed all in the same week!

Average fees for "Shopping Adventures" are as follows:

Type of Visit Continuing Program One Time Shop

Short: \$20 to 25 40 to 50

Medium: 30 to 45 60 to 90

Long: 50 or more 100 or more

SHORT "Shopping Adventures" last about 5 to 10 minutes.

Some examples are:

Convenience Store

Newsstand

Dry Cleaner

Gas Station

Video Rental Store

Ice Cream/Yogurt Shop

Shoe Repair Store

MEDIUM "Shopping Adventures" last about 10 to 20 minutes.

Some examples are:

Book Store

Drug Store

Fast Food Restaurant

Supermarket/Grocery Store

Automotive Supply Store

Specialty Stores in a Mall

LONG "Shopping Adventures" may last 30 minutes or longer.

Some examples are:

Department Store

Fancy Restaurant

Car Dealership

Hotel/Traveling

Camera Shop

Art Gallery

Bank

Auto Service Station

Without Mystery Shoppers, stores can only get information from the customers who are at the far extremes of the satisfaction scale. It is not a totally accurate viewpoint. Either they hear from those who are extremely happy or from those who are not. To get proper feedback from the majority of the customers, stores need people like you. If a store were to worry only about the extremely happy or unhappy customers, they would be missing out on trying to improve service for the people who make up the largest part of their customer base.

While it is very important for businesses to deal with those customers who are very unsatisfied and to thank those who are very satisfied, it is even more important that

they try to improve upon the experience of the vast majority of their customer base who are somewhere in the middle of the satisfaction scale. Herein lies their biggest market for increased sales.

The ones in the middle spend the most, simply because of the sheer numbers. There are more of them. If a store wants to stay in business, don't you agree that it is in their best interest to cater to the middle customers?

List Of Businesses Who Will Pay You To Shop

The following is a listing of several of the larger businesses who will pay people, just like you, to shop as Mystery Shoppers. Each one operates differently. If you would like to Mystery Shop for any of them, you can do so either by writing or calling. When you contact these businesses, please try to be professional and above all courteous. How you act may be a significant factor as to whether or not you receive an upcoming Shopping Adventure from them.

Since each of these businesses are different, you cannot possibly expect to get the same amount of money for each Shopping Adventure that you may go on. If you got paid \$25 to shop for a half hour from one business, that does not mean that the next business will pay you that same amount. Some of these businesses will allow you to get additional free merchandise when you shop. That depends on which store you'll be shopping at and what terms you have agreed to, before you shop.

From now on you should deal only with these businesses. If you have questions about a Shopping Adventure that you are going on, please contact the business that assigned you the job. We will not be able to help you with any questions regarding your Mystery Shopping Adventures.

Please keep in mind that Mystery Shopping is not a 9 to 5 job. The Shopping Adventures that you may go on will vary. On a given day you might get your hair dyed, test drive a brand new Lincoln, and buy a new pair of designer slacks. There also may be days or a week that you do not do any shopping at all. We cannot make a claim for the number of Shopping Adventures you will go on in any given time period. It all depends on the availability of stores to shop at in your local area, as well as if you are willing to travel and what times you are available to shop. Don't get discouraged if you don't meet your financial goals the first week. Everything takes time. Stick with it and enjoy your Mystery Shopping!

Making Contacts

To make a good, first impression you should contact a particular business by sending them a friendly, neat, hand-printed letter or call them. If you mail a letter, you will have to wait for the business to receive your letter and then return the proper forms to you. This may take a couple of weeks. Please be patient and don't keep calling and asking when you can start shopping for them. Keep in mind that businesses need you as much as you need them. If you don't hear back from a business right away, they will of course, keep your name on file until needed.

The amount of Mystery Shopping Adventures that you may go on in a given time period will vary. Having an answering machine gives you an advantage because businesses often will call people for Shopping Adventures.

In this manual each Mystery Shopping job is referred to as a Shopping Adventure. But the businesses who hire you will call it: field work, Mystery Shopping, or a shopping job, etc.

If you have to write a letter to a business, always hand print it neatly. Make sure your punctuation and spelling are correct. You will be 'pre-judged' by your letter. If it's not neatly prepared, that may reflect on how you will fill out Shopper Forms in the future. Take your time, and if you make a mistake, just start over. Keep your letter short, about one to two paragraphs at most. These businesses don't need to be sold on you. They already need you! All you have to do is tell them who you are and that you are available to do Mystery Shopping in your local area. That's it. You do not have to give them any detailed information.

Sample Shopping Form

NOTE: This is a sample only. Each time you go on a Shopping Adventure you will use a different type of form.

STORE NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

QUESTIONS _____

YES NO N/A

Was outside of store clean & free of clutter?

Were windows and doors sparkling clean?

Was lobby area neat and clean?

Were all employees professionally attired?

Were you acknowledged within 30 seconds?

Were products neat and well-stocked?

Did the salespeople:

Greet you in a friendly manner?

Smile?

Appear well-maintained and knowledgeable?

Thank you?

Identify your needs with qualifying questions?

Know products well?

Below is a space for you to write a brief summary of your entire shopping experience.

Based on your observations, would you shop at this location again in the future? _____

Remember to hand-print your letters. The Businesses need to consider your penmanship and the fact that you took the time to write them instead of photocopying a dozen letters that are all the same.

How To Fill Out Your "Shopping Form"

Every "Shopping Form" that you fill out will be different. Some will have questions. Some will have fill in the blanks. Most require a written summary of what happened on your Shopping Adventure. The best way to write a summary, is to write it just like you experienced it. Pretend you are telling your story to a good friend. Your summary doesn't have to be more than a few paragraphs or one page long. You don't have to go into extreme detail. To make it easier for you - here are some of the more important things that you should take notice of, as you shop and then write about later in your summary.

OUTSIDE OF STORE

When you get to the location, as soon as you step out of your car and start walking towards the store, start to take notice and remember what you see. You'll want to check if the parking lot was cluttered with shopping carts, or if the entranceway was easily accessible, were the plants well groomed?

THE ENTRANCEWAY

The next thing you see on a visit is the entrance to the building. Is the walkway clean and neat or is it littered with cigarette butts and other debris! What about the doors! Are they clean? Are the windows clean?

INSIDE THE STORE

When you get inside of the store take notice of the area right inside the door. What was your first impression! Observe the floor. Does it have dirt, spills or litter on it? Notice things as you go about your shopping but don't go out of your way looking at every single detail. Just act like an ordinary customer and "see" only the things that you would normally see.

GREETING

Most stores assign one of their employees the task of greeting each customer who walks through the door. They may greet you right as you enter the store or after you've browsed a while. When someone greets you, the greeting should be a friendly one with eye contact made and a genuine smile given.

SHOWROOM DISPLAY AREA

The showroom is just another term for the inside of the store. It's the entire area where products are displayed. It's where you shop. When observing the showroom display area you might ask yourself: How are products displayed? What is the condition of the area? Is it clean or cluttered? Does it provide a comfortable atmosphere? Are the products easy to reach?

SERVICE

When you're shopping at places such as department stores, clothing, shoe or jewelry stores, this is where service comes in to play. Service is not only limited to getting help finding a product. It is the overall "treatment" you get while you are in the store.

For example: Were salespeople friendly and fast to wait on you, or did they waste time messing around with things not related to the sale? Did the person who waited on you make you feel as if they were glad you were there, or did you feel that your presence was viewed as an interruption of what they were doing? Did they explain how to use a product, or leave you to figure it out on your own? Was the overall atmosphere as well as each employee's performance professional? Service is a broad category and plays a vital part in the success a store has.

THE PRODUCT

The reason customers go to a retail outlet in the first place is to avail themselves of the product or service marketed by that particular company. Therefore stores are going to be particularly interested in your satisfaction with the product or service you receive.

In all cases, the best way to evaluate the product or service is to hold it up against what you, as a consumer, would normally expect. If it's within your expectations, then it is a satisfactory product or service. When it falls out of this area, to what degree does it fail to live up to your expectations?

SPECIAL AREAS

Special areas in a store include places such as the dressing rooms and rest rooms. It's important to check out these areas, too, because they play a very large role in the quality of a customer's experience. As you check out these areas, don't do anything differently than if you weren't a Mystery Shopper. For instance, don't ask the salesperson if you can go and look in the fitting room. Make sure you actually try a garment on. In the fitting rooms, notice if they are clean. Is an attendant handy? Are you limited to a certain number of garments at one time?

The rest room is an area of real importance. Is it clean? Are hand soap, tissue and a hand dryer or towels available?

CASH REGISTER

Of course, this is where the sales transaction takes place. While you are getting rung up, look to see how many people are waiting in line. Did the salesperson ring you up correctly or did they make a mistake? Did you get thanked for your purchase? Did you leave with a good impression and a feeling that you would like to return again to do some shopping?

Mystery Shopping Quick Start

Here is a "Quick-Start" plan to get you started making money as fast as you can. Follow this plan and you can be making piles of money in less time than you think!

1. Read this entire manual, How to Get Paid to Shop. Even though you may be anxious to get started, you must first learn all you can about Mystery Shopping. If you miss something, in the long-run it may cost you a Shopping Adventure.
2. Hand-write a letter to one of the Businesses who pay people to shop as "Mystery Shoppers". Don't feel like you have to send letters to all Businesses at once. It's best to take it one step at a time to see if this is really something you like to do.
3. While you're waiting to hear back from a Business, read this manual again. The more familiar you are with "Mystery Shopping", the better you will do.
4. Have someone take a photograph of you. Some Businesses will ask for your photograph, to put with your Application they keep on file. A head shot is fine. You certainly don't have to get a professional photographer. Just use any camera you have at your house, or borrow a friends.
5. If you want to make some extra money and have some spare time, start checking your local phone book for Market Research Businesses. Contact them by telephone or by sending a letter.
6. When a Business contacts you about being a Mystery Shopper, fill out the appropriate forms right away and send them back to that Business.
7. Remember to be patient. Success will come your way if you do what it takes. Once you start contacting Businesses, we will no longer be able to help you with those contacts. You will have to keep track of your "Mystery Shopping" from there on out.
8. Have a Great Time Shopping!

Thank you for your interest in becoming a "Mystery Shopper". By implementing the systems and contacting the Businesses in this manual, you can now start making some fantastic money as a "Mystery Shopper". You will have a wonderful new lifestyle shopping at magnificent malls, beautiful department stores, designer clothing shops, specialty stores and hundreds more! And the amazing part is... you Get Paid to Shop plus you get Free Merchandise! The opportunity Mystery Shopping offers is truly unlimited!

Mystery Shopping truly is the ultimate dream job! Now that you have read this entire manual and are fully prepared to be a Mystery Shopper, we urge you to start right away. There's no better time to make money than today!

Resources: List of Mystery Shopping Companies

We have over 80 Mystery Shopping Companies where you can sign up DIRECTLY with them. We list them in 2 portions:

Companies without website application – You have to write-in or call them directly for application

Companies with website application – You can visit the company's website for more information as well as signing up with them

Note: We have done our best to make the list updated. We are not responsible for any un-contacted companies. We are not responsible for any loss or damages, whether implied or expressed, when you are dealing with the companies listed.

Companies without website application

You may write or call the following businesses to find out their specific needs. If you don't hear back from one of the businesses right away, they will of course keep your name on file until they need you. Note: Most of these businesses operate nationwide. Merely because their corporate address is not near you, it doesn't mean that you can't shop for them in your local area.

C.R.I.

National Field Director
Route 9
Box 44~7
Kinderhook, NY 12106

C.S.S., Inc.

P. O. Box 3307
Van Nuys, CA 91407-3307

Shopper

9980 E. Progress Circle
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

Dale System, Inc.

1101 Stewart Avenue
Garden City, NY 11530 (No telephone calls - please write.)

In business for 65 years. They do NOT need Shoppers in the following areas of California: Orange, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, or San Diego county. They DO need Shoppers in the following parts of California: San Francisco, Santa Rose and Sacramento. They DO need Shoppers in ALL OTHER STATES.

G. G.

1300 114th Avenue, S. E.,
Suite 220
Bellevue, WA 98004

Currently they only need Shoppers in the following states: WA, OR, ID, MT, WY, UT, OH, CO, AZ, NM, AK, HI. They do not offer free merchandise. They also do not pay per mile but pay extra money based on the distance you travel.

Q. A. Mystery Shoppers, Inc.

ATTN: Mr. Conner
P. O. Box 9009
Austin, TX 78766

They operate in the southern half of the U.S. If you live in a southern state (excluding California) you may contact them.

Professional Research Associates

ATTN: Rickie Kruh
2138 South Bay Lane
Reston, VA 22091 (No telephone calls - please write.)

Best Mark - T.I.P.S

4915 West 35 St.,
Suite 206
Minneapolis, MN 55416

They are one of the largest mystery shopping contractors in the nation and currently have about 7,000 shops per month operating in almost every state and are continuously growing. They send out post cards to their shoppers every month which gives them the date and time to contact them to sign up for the shops available.

M.I.F.

1572 Capital Circle Northwest
Tallahassee, FL 32303

F.C.S.

167 Central Avenue
Pacific Grove, CA 93950

In business 30 years. Currently have approximately 6,000 shoppers.

D.S.A.

2110 East First St.,
Suite 106
Santa Ana, CA 92705

Use "Mystery Shoppers" in all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico and Guam.

L.G.L

15237 Sunset Blvd.
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

In business for ten years and use shoppers in all 50 states.

Companies with website application

Ace Mystery Shopping
<http://www.agemysteryshopping.com>

A Closer Look
<http://www.a-closer-look.com/ACL/index.html>

Acra Secret Shopping & Market Research
<http://www.secretshopacra.com>

Allied Protective Service
<http://www.alcops.com>

Amusement Advantage
<http://www.amusementadvantage.com>

A Step Above Service Evaluations
<http://www.serviceevaluations.com>

At Your Service Marketing
<http://www.aysm.com>

Ath Power
<http://www.athpower.com>

Bare Associates
<http://www.baiservices.com>

Barry Leeds & Associates
<http://www.barryleedsassoc.com>

B Business Solutions
<http://www.bizshoptalk.com>

Best Mark
<http://www.bestmark.com>

Better Marketing Associates
<http://www.mysteryshopping.com>

Beyond Hello
<http://www.beyondhello.com>

Bison Security Group
<http://www.bsgcorp.com>

Business Evaluation Services
<http://www.mysteryshopperservices.com>

Byers Choice Inc.
<http://www.byerschoiceinc.com>

Campus Consulting
<http://www.shopaudits.com>

Capstone Research
<http://www.capstoneresearch.com>

Cirrus Marketing
<http://www.cirrusmktg.com>

Confero
<http://www.conferoinc.com>

Contemporary Research Center
<http://www.crcdata.com>

Corporate Research International
<http://www.mysteryshops.com>

Courtesy Counts
<http://www.courtesycounts.com>

Customer Perceptions
<http://www.customerperceptions.com>

Customer Service Perceptions
<http://www.csperceptions.com>

Data Quest
<http://www.dataquestonline.com>

David Sparks & Associates
<http://www.sparkresearch.com>

Decision Services
<http://www.iccds.com>

Douglas Stafford
<http://www.douglasstafford.com>

DSG Associates Inc
<http://www.dsgai.com>

Ellis Property Management Services
<http://www.epmsonline.com>

ESP Evaluation Systems for Personnel
<http://www.espshop.com>

Feedback Plus
<http://www.gofeedback.com>

Focus On Service

<http://www.focusonservice.com>

Global Compliance

<http://www.pktnshop.com>

Green & Associates

<http://www.greenandassociates.com>

Greet America

<http://www.greetamerica.com>

Hilli Dunlap Enterprises

<http://www.dunlapenterprises.com>

Hindsight

<http://www.hndsight.com>

ICC Decision Services

<http://www.iccds.com>

Infotel

<http://www.infotelinc.com>

Intellishop

<http://www.intelli-shop.com>

Investigative Marketing

<http://www.investigativemarketing.com>

Jancyn

<http://www.jancyn.com>

J.M. Ridgeway

<http://www.jmridgway.com>

Ken-Rich Retail Group

<http://www.ken-rich.com>

LeBlanc & Associates

<http://www.mleblanc.com>

Marketing Systems Unlimited

<http://www.msultd.com>

Market Viewpoint

<http://www.marketviewpoint.com>

Melinda Brody and Company

<http://www.melindabrody.com>

Mystery Guest

<http://www.mysteryquestinc.com>

Mystery Shopper, USA

<http://www.bmilttd.com>

Mystery Shop Plus

<http://www.mysteryshopsplus.com>

Mystique Shopper

<http://www.mystiqueshopper.com>

National Shopping

<http://www.nssmysteryshoppers.com>

Pat Henry

<http://www.thepathenrygroup.com>

Patron Edge

<http://www.patronedge.com>

PROS

<http://www.proreview.com>

Quality Assessments Mystery Shoppers

<http://www.qams.com>

Quality Check

<http://www.undercovershoppers.com>

Quality Marketing

<http://www.quality-marketing.com>

Reality Check

<http://www.rcmysteryshopper.com>

Retail Biz Consulting

<http://www.retailbiz.com>

Retail Track

<http://www.retailtrack.com>

RoperNop

<http://www.cybershoppersonline.com>

Second To None

<http://www.second-to-none.com>

Secret Shopper

<http://www.secretshopper.com>

Secret Shopper Company

<http://www.secretshoppercompany.com>

Secret Shopnet
<http://www.secretshopnet.com>

Sensors Quality Management
<http://www.sgm.ca>

Service Advantage International
<http://www.servad.com>

Service Check
<http://www.servicecheck.com>

Service Excellence Group
<http://www.serviceexcellencegroup.com>

Service Trac Inc
<http://www.servicetrac.com>

SG Marketing
<http://www.sgmarketing.com>

The Shadow Agency
<http://www.theshadowagency.com>

Shoppers' Critique
<http://www.shopperscritique.com>

Shoppers Inc.
<http://www.shopperjobs.com>

Shoppers' View
<http://www.shoppersview.com>

Speedmark
<http://www.speedmarkweb.com>

TestShopper
<http://www.testshopper.com>

The Quest for the Best
<http://www.questforbest.com>

TNC Media Intelligence
<http://www.rapidchek.com>

WebTech Data Services
<http://www.webbtech.com>

WeNeed
<http://www.weneed.com>

Resources: Mystery Shopping Forums

As a mystery shopper, you need updated information/ advice in this industry. Why not join a forum where you can receive advice on being a better mystery shopper?

Check out some of the very best Mystery Shopper forums on the Internet:

Mystery Shopper Forum

<http://forums.delphiforums.com/mysteryshpper/start>

Mystery Shopper Advice

<http://forums.delphiforums.com/shopadvice/>

Mystery Shopper United!

<http://forums.delphiforums.com/mshoppersunite/start>

Shopper Queen

<http://forums.delphiforums.com/shopperqueen/start>

BAI Mystery Shopper

<http://forums.delphiforums.com/BAIMS/start>