

Let 'em deck the halls! Crazy-cute Santa crafts

ISSUE 270
DEC/JANUARY 2013

parenting

modern families + fresh ideas

Unwrap. Squeal. Repeat.

Our top toy picks

THE BEST
elf on the shelf
IDEAS EVER

#1 secret of
HAPPY
FAMILIES

They do
what in
kindergarten?

New
BABY
FOOD
Rules
p. 28

THE GREAT
CHICKEN
FINGER
MAKEOVER

**"I ONLY WANT
ONE CHILD."**
p. 50

U.S. \$3.99 Display until January 15





Pick Your Path

ONLINE OR IN STORES

Is your idea of retail nirvana shopping in your pj's while the baby naps—or would you rather leave the kids with a sitter while you wander the decked-out aisles? Either way, you'll need a good game plan...

Your Online Tool Kit

1 Install a free "shopping companion" browser app, like *PriceBlink* (priceblink.com) or *Invisible Hand* (invisiblehand.com). When you click on a Lego set, say, you'll get a pop-up telling you if coupons are available or if there's a better price on another site. "It's like your best friend saying 'Wait! I found a bargain over there,'" says Trae Bodge, mom of a second-grader and senior writer for the RetailMeNot Insider blog.

2 Do your own check for coupon codes at retailmenot.com, couponcabin.com, or couponmom.com. Don't forget to stack! Even if a site accepts only one code (say, for free shipping or 20 percent off), it'll apply the higher-value one, says Brad Wilson, founder of bradsdeals.com.

3 For electronics, tech toys, and game consoles (if you've got a kid in school, you'll probably be looking for one), swing by decide.com. It compares prices and advises—based on price history and if a new model's due—if you should buy now or wait. On the fence? Set a price you'll pay, and it'll e-mail you if it finds it. (Full access is \$4.95 a month; get a free month's trial with code PARENTINGMAG.)

4 If you get wind of a web bargain (cybermonday.com is a good place to sneak an advance peek), "put the items in your shopping cart ahead of time and make the purchase fast on Black Friday or Cyber Monday morning," says Elle Benet, co-founder of social-media shopping site girlsunited.us (many sites let you save your cart for 24 hours). And yes: Black Friday deals are often online, too—no sharp elbows needed, but fast fingers help.

5 Member of a rewards program? Start your shopping through its online portal for bonuses and discounts. *NerdWallet's Shopping Tool* (nerdwallet.com/coupons) lets you search by credit card, program, or retailer to find the best deals.



BOOKMARK THIS @shopcybermonday is the official Twitter feed for Cyber Monday. It will tweet up-to-the-minute deals from some 700 participating retailers.

Your Mall or Megastore Must-Haves

1 Braving Black Friday? The *Black Friday App* from dealnews.com will alert you to the hottest deals by store and category. *Black Friday* from fatwallet.com flags doorbusters so you can grab 'em first.

2 Nix worries over whether the store down the street has the same game for less with a free price-comparison app. Scan a bar code, and eBay's *RedLaser* spits out prices in nearby stores and online, and offers coupons, too. The *Find* app not only compares prices but lets you set up a "price watch" if it's still too rich for your budget.

3 Don't check out before checking the *Coupon Sherpa* app for an extra discount (it has hundreds for major retailers); show your phone to the cashier to cash in.

4 Get rewarded for your retail efforts with the free *ShopKick* app. Collect points ("kicks") just for walking into stores or scanning items (at stores like Target, Old Navy, and Toys "R" Us), then trade them in for treats (500 kicks gets you a \$5 Target gift card, for instance). It'll also shoot you in-store deals and discounts.

TIME TOYS RIGHT You'll see up to half off hot toys on Black Friday, but the prices will drop more as Christmas gets closer, says Lindsay Sakraida of dealnews.com.

