

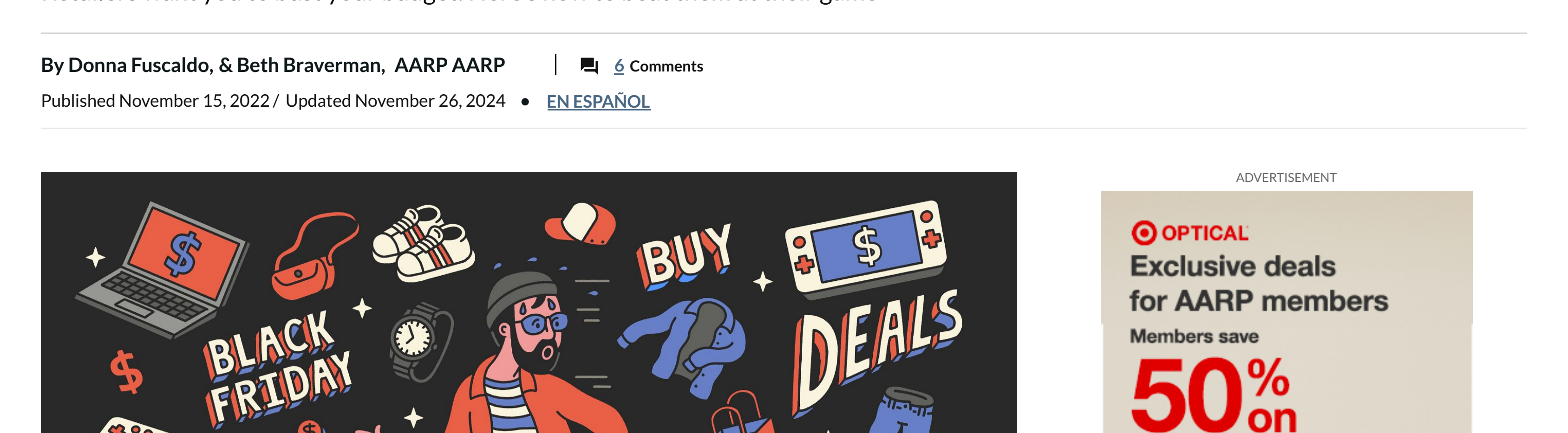
**LIMITED TIME OFFER!** **AARP** BLACK FRIDAY SALE **TWO MORE YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP ONLY \$20** when you switch to automatic renewal **PLUS, A FREE GIFT!** **ENROLL**

**7 Black Friday Spending Traps to Avoid**

Retailers want you to bust your budget. Here's how to beat them at their game

By Donna Fuscaldo, & Beth Braverman, AARP AARP | 6 Comments

Published November 15, 2022 / Updated November 26, 2024 • EN ESPAÑOL



GETTY IMAGES

The holidays are a time for celebrating, spending time with loved ones and enjoying the festivities of the season. Unfortunately, they're also a time for overspending.

More than half of holiday shoppers recently told Nerdwallet that the costs associated with the holidays stress them out, and four in 10 say that they feel pressure to spend more than they're comfortable with on holiday gifts.

**AARP** 2 more years of membership only \$20 when you switch to Automatic Renewal. Plus, receive a gift! **Enroll >**

Some of that pressure is likely coming from retailers, including during Black Friday when they use a range of strategies to get you to spend more than you may have planned.

"Retailers have had over a century to perfect their playbook on how to get you to spend more, especially during the holidays," says Howard Dvorkin, chairman of Debt.com. "This season, it's not just about doorbusters, it's about creating a shopping experience that makes you feel like you're getting a deal when you might not be."

Finding bargains on gifts is a big focus for consumers this holiday season. Inflation has eased a bit, but prices are still elevated, forcing shoppers to stretch their budgets to cover everyone on their lists. Three-quarters of shoppers polled by Deloitte said they planned to shop at least one promotional event this year, up from 61 percent last year.

Whether you're getting up in the wee hours of the morning to get your hands on a doorbuster deal or just looking for general discounts, there are lots of ways retailers entice you to open your wallet. Here's a look at some popular strategies and how to avoid falling for these traps.

**Bodge's rule of thumb on what to buy on Black Friday sales and what to wait to buy later:**

**Black Friday — Buy now**

- Laptops and other tech
- TVs and other electronics
- Fall apparel
- Small appliances
- Beauty products

**Black Friday — Wait to buy later**

- Outerwear
- Winter apparel
- Toys
- Anything holiday themed

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER ADVERTISEMENT

1. BEST CAR INSURANCE FOR SENIORS OVER 60 >	4. 8% HIGH-YIELD CDS FOR SENIORS >
2. BEST MATTRESSES BY CONSUMER REPORTS >	5. HOW TO CANCEL A TIMESHARE CONTRACT >
3. TOP 5 CAR INSURANCE FOR SENIORS >	6. 10 BEST MATTRESSES FOR BACK PAIN >

Lifestyle Insights

**1. Unfounded sense of urgency**

FOMO is real, especially during Black Friday weekend. Who wants to miss out on a hot deal on whatever they covet? Retailers are very aware of that fear and create a sense of urgency to get you into stores. "Consumers believe Black Friday is the be-all, end-all to get the very best deal," says Trae Bodge, a shopping expert at TrueTrae.com. "Retailers may limit stock on certain things or make them available only for a certain time period. All those elements give us the sense that we have to jump right now."

**How to avoid it:** Without a doubt, some deals will be available only during Black Friday weekend, but that doesn't mean discounts won't abound throughout the holiday shopping season.

**Member Benefits AARP** RESTAURANTS **Chart House®** 10% off dine-in and to-go orders MEMBERS ONLY

**2. Too good to be true**

To get you into stores, retailers offer really good deals during Black Friday. Not all of them are what they seem. If something sounds too good to be true, it often is. "During the holiday season, many of those 50 percent off signs aren't as generous as they appear," Dvorkin says. "Retailers often hike up prices just before slashing them, making it look like a great deal when it's really just a game of numbers."

There's also the bait-and-switch element of Black Friday deals. Sure, [TVs are on sale](#), but there's only a limited quantity. After that, you're steering toward a higher-priced model. Sometimes consumers think they are getting a deep discount on the latest model, but it's really last year's or one of lesser quality.

**How to avoid it:** Read the fine print on all Black Friday ads to make sure you're getting the exact product you want. [Comparison shop](#) online before purchasing. A quick Google search will show how much the item costs at competing retailers. If it's available nearby and the savings are significant, the extra trip may be worthwhile.

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER ADVERTISEMENT

**3. Impulse buys at the ready**

It's hard to resist impulse buys, particularly during the holiday season. Long lines give you a lot of time to browse, and stores make it very easy. "Retailers rely on crowds to create a sense of confusion with shoppers," Bodge says. "They may do things like put pricey items up front, place them at eye level, and put buzzy, colorful add-on things right near the register." You didn't need that gold wrapping paper before, but now you do.

**How to avoid it:** Santa isn't the only one who should have a list. Create a plan and a budget, and stick to them. [Inflation](#) is high, which means you'll get less bang for your buck. Just because something is on sale or would be a nice additional gift doesn't mean you need to purchase it. If sticking to a budget is really hard, shop with cash and leave your cards at home.

**4. Stores make it too easy to pay**

Whether it's [buy now, pay later](#) options or 20 percent-off offers for opening store credit cards, retailers make it easy to pay for your holiday hauls. They also make it easy for you to overspend by offering these deals quickly online and in stores. In some cases, they have sales reps roaming the floor with mobile tablets, opening credit cards for customers on the fly, Bodge says. The problem is that the bill will eventually come due, and if you don't have the means to pay, you could end up in financial trouble.

**How to avoid it:** Store credit cards and buy now, pay later aren't bad as long as you're aware of the costs associated with them, Bodge says. Store cards tend to have a high annual percentage rate (APR) if you carry a balance, and there are fees associated with buy now, pay later if you don't pay your bill on time.

**5. Bogus bonuses**

Spend \$50 and get \$10 off, get 20 percent off when you spend \$100, and buy three, get one free are common offers during the holidays. Online, retailers will throw in free shipping if you spend a certain amount.

"They make you think you're saving money, but if you're spending more than you matter who convincing they appear — type the retailer's website directly into your Web browser to take advantage of any potential deals. Palmer also suggests using a credit card to pay for online purchases, since they come with stronger consumer fraud protections than debit cards.

**How to avoid it:** Be careful not to fall into the trap of thinking you have to spend more to save more. That only makes sense if you can't get the item cheaper elsewhere and it's something you buy a lot of. If you're grabbing this or that to raise your bill and get the discount, put the items down and breathe. Do the math to make sure it's worth it, Dvorkin says. Chances are it isn't.

**6. Stingy return policies**

While many large retailers extend their return windows for the holiday season, some merchants enforce stricter policies that might end before you've even had a chance to give your gift. Charging for returns of online purchases has also become more common, with more than 80 percent of retailers polled last year saying they had recently started charging for at least one return method.

**How to avoid it:** Read return policies carefully before making your purchases. "Store return policies vary a lot, but they're all posted on their websites," says Kimberly Palmer, a consumer expert at Nerdwallet.

**7. Retail scams**

This one is not executed by retailers, but rather by scammers looking to take advantage of the uptick in online shopping around the holidays. Fraudsters use fake emails, text messages and social media ads to entice victims to click on links that either install malware on their devices or direct them to bogus websites designed to mimic those of actual retailers where they can capture the shopper's credit card information.

**How to avoid it:** Rather than clicking on links sent by email or text message — no matter who convincing they appear — type the retailer's website directly into your Web browser to take advantage of any potential deals. Palmer also suggests using a credit card to pay for online purchases, since they come with stronger consumer fraud protections than debit cards.

*Donna Fuscaldo is a contributing writer and editor focusing on personal finance and health. She has spent over two decades writing and covering news for several national publications including The Wall Street Journal, Forbes, Investopedia and HerMoney.*

*Beth Braverman is a contributing writer who has covered shopping and personal finance for more than a decade. Her work has appeared in Consumer Reports, CNNMoney.com, CNBC.com, and dozens of other outlets.*

**More From AARP**

**5 Ways To Stop Retirement Overspending** Spending too much? Here's how to cut down

**How to Cover Rising Utility Bills** Home heating costs are soaring as we head into the winter

**Save Money on Energy and Taxes** Give inflation a double whammy with energy savings and tax credits

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER ADVERTISEMENT

**Benefits Recommended For You** See All >

**WORK & JOBS** **AARP Work & Jobs** Find a range of useful tools, insight and inspiration

**WORK & JOBS** **AARP Job Board** Search job opportunities for experienced workers

**MEMBERS ONLY** **INSURANCE** **AARP® Motorcycle Insurance Program from Foremost®** Discounts on coverage, roadside assistance and more

**MEMBERS ONLY** **TRAVEL** **Home2 Suites by Hilton®** Up to 10% off and late checkout until 2 p.m. when available

**HOT DEALS** SAVE MONEY WITH THESE LIMITED-TIME OFFERS

See All Hot Deals >

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER ADVERTISEMENT

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that empowers people to choose how they live as they age.

About Us Donate Volunteer Membership AARP Rewards Advertise with AARP Contact Us Careers at AARP Policy & Research Newsletters AARP In Your City AARP En Español Press Center AARP Foundation Wish of a Lifetime Senior Planet | OATS AgeTech Collaborative™ Legal Counsel for the Elderly

Sitemap Privacy Policy Terms of Service Accessibility Statement

AARP Rewards Terms & Conditions Copyright Information Vulnerability Disclosure Program

Ad Choices Your Privacy Choices Cobrowse

Facebook Twitter Instagram LinkedIn