



Back-to-School Clothes Shopping

It's a Snap!

Back-to-school clothes shopping can get a little crazy. In fact, it can lead to crankiness all around. From trendy stores with glaring lights and blaring music to discount stores that carry every size but your daughter's. Throw in exhaustion, hunger, disagreements and younger siblings and you've got a recipe for disaster. Fortunately, these experienced San Diego parents can offer plenty of tips to help make shopping fun, budget friendly and easier for all.

Budget

"I buy things too big so they last a few seasons," says Kim Curran, a mother of two from North Park. She also makes the most of store coupons by using them at outlet malls.

First things first. If your wardrobe is out of control, then chances are your kids' wardrobes are, too. Start by cleaning out closets and differentiating between wants and needs. Scrutinize your own spending habits and attitudes towards fashion. If changes are needed, make them together as a family.

Next, an organized and well thought out list will streamline your budget. Stock up on basic items to add to "still good" school clothes and set aside an amount for fun accessories. Don't shy away from high-end department stores—their sales and clearance racks are worth scouting. Finally, staying within budget is especially easy when you shop with cash, not plastic.

Different ages require different strategies, however with guidance even preschoolers can follow a list and understand dollar amounts. Be firm about sticking to "their" budget and offer only two to three choices per item when shopping. Buying out of season works well for young kids as their tastes and growth rates are somewhat predictable.

Tweens can begin to appreciate quality over quantity. Teach them about the durability of different materials and how to mix and match for variety. Have them keep track of expenses by keeping a running balance on their money envelope, and always go over receipts making sure they understand that tax is an expense, too.

Teens can take charge of their shopping if they have been taught well. If you have older teens that work for their own money, perhaps agree to purchase necessities while they buy the extras throughout the season. Appeal to their creativity, and your pockets, by shopping at resale/thrift shops and joining a sewing class. As a bonus, most thrift stores offer student discounts, and some vintage/resale shops will buy your secondhand clothing!

Help Kids Choose

"I enjoy watching my kids develop their own sense of style and use fashion as a form of creative expression. However, there are times when they go a little too far and I have to reel it in. This morning my 10-year-old daughter wanted to wear a faux fur tail, suspenders and a hat. Something had to give," says Felicia Watson from Little Italy.

Oh, the woes of individuality! One day you are trying to talk your kindergartener out of yet another Spiderman T-shirt, and before you know it, you're discussing the merits of blue hair versus green. The good news is that developing good habits now will help head off any real drama later.

North County dad Chris Airriess, says that his 10-year-old daughter definitely has her own style, like making dresses out of her mom's skirts.

"I let her be her own self and do her own thing," Airriess explains.

In fact, all the parents I spoke with agreed that letting young children choose their "style" is fine as long as it's

practical and comfortable for their activity level. You can have your kids sit cross-legged on the dressing room floor and hop around a bit to test for comfort. If you find a great fit, buy the same piece in multiple colors. Parents also say not to worry about eccentric choices, like capes or rain boots, as long as it will not distract them or others in class.

Ten-year-old Isabelle is currently into neon colors.

"I let her make choices with bright colors and her accessories," says Kim Curran. Isabelle recently purchased long, laced gloves that made her parents do a double-take but Curran says, "I try not to make too big a deal out of it because it's a phase. I may not approve of everything, but I make sure it's not inappropriate."

Remember, parents always retain the right to veto a clothing purchase if it's inappropriate, however explaining your rationale is important if you want them making good choices in their teens and beyond.

With teens, you can discuss how our dress directly relates to other's

perception of us, especially in professional situations. Teens will also be able to understand the environmental and global economic impact of their clothing choices. Google "life cycle of a T-shirt" or "fast fashion" for inspiring videos and articles. Clothes made from organic cotton are widely available, from stores like H&M to top brands such as Volcom.

Troubleshoot with Tweens and Teens

Teens definitely need to express themselves but they can learn to do this with "class" if they are taught how. If your child wants to wear something inappropriate, get to the reasons behind their desire. Wearing things "too tight" and "too short"

Tips for Sensory-Sensitive Children

If your child complains that clothes are painful and itchy, or simply refuses to wear the "uncomfortable" clothes you've purchased, you may have a sensory-sensitive child. Check out these helpful tips just for you.

- Be patient with your child.
- Believe them when they say it hurts.
- Choose seamless socks and underwear (SmartKnitKids.com).
- Buy "soft clothing" (SoftClothing.net).
- Find support (blog.friendshipcircle.org).
- Get the facts (Out-of-sync-child.com).
- Get help from an occupational therapist (OtOutdoors.com).



Find more resources in "Flourishing Families," our guide for families with special needs.

www.sandiegofamily.com/resources/flourishing-families-special-needs-resources.

Catholic Schooling

Preschool • Kindergarten • Elementary • Junior High

Be part of a community that cares... today's Catholic Schools are about belonging and contributing to our community the compassion to make a better world, and the opportunity to succeed in academic excellence. Now more than ever we want to provide our students with a moral, spiritual and solid academic foundation. To learn more about enrollment and how you can be part of the strong Catholic School community, contact a local Catholic School listed below.



- Challenging Academics
- Limited Class Size
- Physical Fitness Program
- Enrichment Classes
- Before/After-School Care
- Computer Lab
- Fine Arts Programs

We're convinced that a Catholic education will enrich your child's life.

ENROLL NOW!

All Hallows Academy

K – 8th
858-459-6074

La Jolla

www.allhallowsacademy.com

Blessed Sacrament Parish School

Preschool & K – 8th
619-582-3862

College Area

www.bsps-sd.org
Lic. #: 372005621

Nazareth School

Preschool & K – 8th
619-641-7987

Mission Valley

www.nazarethschool.com
Lic. #: 372005541

St. Therese Academy

Preschool & K – 8th
619-583-6270

Del Cerro/SDSU

www.sta-sd.org
Lic. #: 372005988

Holy Family School

Preschool & K – 8th
858-277-0222

Linda Vista

www.hfsd.catholicweb.com
Lic. #: 372005541

St. Columba School

Preschool & K – 8th
858-279-1882

Serra Mesa/Tierrasanta

www.stcolumbaschoolsd.org
Lic. #: 372005946

St. Vincent de Paul School

Preschool & K – 8th
619-296-2222

Hillcrest/Mission Hills

www.svsatholic.org

The Nativity School

K – 8th
858-756-6763

Rancho Santa Fe

www.thenativityschool.org

St. Didacus Parish School

Preschool & K – 8th
619-284-8730

Normal Heights/Kensington

www.stdidacusparishschool.org
Lic. #: 372006440

Stella Maris Academy

K – 8th
858-454-2461

La Jolla/UTC/PB

www.stellamarisacademy.org



may be a reflection of your child's friends' wardrobes and the need to fit in. Making allies with other parents and formulating a plan together can be helpful.

Girls need to understand that how they dress can lead to negative rumors being spread about them and false perceptions from guys about their sexuality. We need to empower girls to use their mind and their personality as their greatest assets. Realize, however, that dressing too differently from their peers can lead to depression and other problems.

The key is to value your child's individuality, while maintaining dialogue about what her clothing says about her. I survived the super-skinny jean era with two teenagers, and if this fashionista fraud can do it, so can you!

Make Shopping Fun

"I take her shopping. We go to Target. We just walk around the kids' section and I say, 'Do you like this? Do you like this?'" and we throw it in the cart and go," says Airriess of his shopping strategy.

Maybe it's a guy thing, but this approach would definitely work with my son, leaving plenty of time to grab lunch together.

For younger children and those who cringe at long shopping outings, break up trips into shorter segments by breaking for lunch or play time. Don't run yourself ragged with driving to multiple locations in one day. Over time, you will know which stores are best for your family and you can then hit each one on separate days. The all-important list will keep you focused.

For "shop till you drop" teens who love the whole shopping experience, send them with their friends. As long as they stick to their needed items, your family's "style" guidelines and the budget, you will be happy and they will have a great time. ❖

Laura Pardo and her husband strive to raise three minimalist, sewing-savvy, thrift-store-hopping kids in the neighborhood of South Park.

Each Catholic School differs slightly. Please call your local school for specific information.