

Online Comparison Shopping

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Millions of shoppers scout for bargains on the Internet every day. These bargain hunters increasingly find their way to comparison shopping sites designed to help visitors search for specific items from a wide variety of vendors. Comparison shopping sites are specifically designed to appeal to the broadest possible group of consumers, enabling merchants and prospective buyers to link up in ways that were not possible before the Internet.

Comparison shopping sites are not designed to offer products themselves, because this would represent a supreme conflict of interest. However, they do receive a small override if you buy from a site you found through them.

Some comparison shopping sites, such as mySimon.com and BizRate.com, google.com/products, cover a wide territory and list virtually every type of consumer and business item you can name. Other comparison shopping sites are specialized, such as HealthPricer.com and can help a visitor search for 300,000 to 350,000 health products from more than 100 health merchants.

Scan and Snatch

The best comparison-shopping sites continuously scan the Internet, gathering information about complete inventories of items offered at individual merchant sites elsewhere on the Web. Unbeknownst to many comparison-shopping site patrons, the sites

themselves earn revenue on a paid-per-action basis. Every time you're referred to a site of a merchant carrying the item you seek and you end up making a purchase, the comparison-shopping site receives a small percentage of the purchase price.

A Walk-Through of Top Sites

PriceGrabber.com PriceGrabber presents an array of product categories down the right-hand side of the page and highlights specific products on the rest of the screen. You can register with PriceGrabber, sell items, and develop your own lists of items to track, bookmarking any lists with a few clicks of your mouse.

If an item you're seeking becomes available somewhere on the Web, you can receive an alert to avoid ever missing out on a potential bargain. The site also offers extensive and helpful product reviews, which is further evidence that there is much to be learned and gained from visiting PriceGrabber.

MyBargainBuddy.com Here's a site that features bargain items for sale and is updated daily. You can select any one of six tabs featured across the top of the page to research an item and determine what deals might be best for you. Or, you can pursue the latest bargains that greet you on the home page each time you visit.

MyBargainBuddy is a shopper's engine you'll enjoy visiting repeatedly. You can sign up for the site's e-mail newsletter that

announces the latest offerings. You can find coupons and discounts that help make good deals even better.

mySimon.com mySimon, a member of the CNET network established in the mid 1990s, is a reliable resource for legions of users. You can enter the types of items you're seeking in its search box or search by product category down the right side of the screen. You can find a plethora of vital services including "consumer reports" representing product readings submitted by other site visitors.

DealTime.com A heavyweight in the world of online shopping, DealTime is simple and effective. You can search for a specific product or a category of products; you control your experience. Merchant reviews allow you to read up on what other site visitors are saying about DealTime and their stores. Patrons of DealTime rave about its reliability and the ease of navigation.

PriceSCAN.com PriceSCAN offers a myriad of comparison shopping features and services such as a helpful index, extensive product reviews, a comparison shopper's blog, and a variety of ways to research an individual product, brand, or category of products. It offers helpful toolbars, search bars, and drop down menus.

Jeff Davidson is the work-life balance expert for our time-pressed workforce. He wrote "Breathing Space" and the "60 Second Self-Starter." Visit BreathingSpace.com or call 800.735.1994.