

dealsaver Get up to 90% off SIGN UP!

fresnobee.com

Customer Service

FREE PHONES

On America's Largest and Most Reliable Wireless Network.

Today, save up to \$35 a line with Free Activation plus get Free Shipping with online orders.

NEW 2YR ACTIVATION REQ'D. DATA PAK REQ'D ON SELECT PHONES.

Learn More

News Obits Sports Entertainment Life Opinion Blogs

Classified Cars

Web Search powered by YAHOO! SEARCH

SIGN IN | BECOME A MEMBER

You're in the Business section

Devoted coupon hunters cut out for extreme savings

Posted at 10:30 PM on Tuesday, Jun. 07, 2011

By Bethany Clough / The Fresno Bee

32 Comments

SHARE 14

40 retweet

E-MAIL PRINT

TEXT SIZE: - +

Getting \$1,000 worth of body wash, toothpaste and other personal products nearly free with coupons?

Impossible, right?

Not according to local "extreme shoppers" who got the items by paying only sales tax.

The shoppers are part of a new breed of bargain hunters who scour the Internet for creative ways to use coupons that can cut a \$300 Target shopping trip down to \$150, and bring some bills down to zero.

Inspired by the new TLC show "Extreme Couponing" and the economic downturn, the trend is taking hold in Fresno and across the country.

"We can find coupons for anything," said Jen Dote of Fresno. "You never should pay for toothbrushes and toothpaste."



Similar stories:

- Real-estate brokers expand beyond Web listings to blogs, social media
- ILLNESS, PERSPECTIVE, MOM
- Rules of the Road: How to have a scream-free vacation with the kids
- Crafting with kids: Why creating with your little ones is important
- 'Does it work?': Products worth a look

Dote says she isn't as extreme as some of the couponers featured on the show – like the woman who has a 40-year stockpile of

Tri Ro Untr 2 Ro



CRAIG KOHLRUSS / THE FRESNO BEE

Rebekah Hescox, left, and Jen Dote organize coupons

[CLICK FOR MORE PHOTOS](#)

BY THE NUMBERS

An average week in the lives of extreme couponers Jen Dote and Rebekah Hescox:

3,332: Coupons clipped

30: Hours spent researching, clipping coupons and shopping

600: Items donated to charities

30: Blogs and websites researched for deals

\$2,000: Total retail value of items they have donated, paying only sales tax

Anatomy of a deal

Product: Two 100-packet boxes of Splenda

Where: Walgreens

Regular price: \$5.79

Walgreens sale: \$2.99

Manufacturer coupon: \$3 off each

Total bill for both: \$0

Savings: \$11.58

Register Rewards earned: \$3 to spend at Walgreens

Product: Fresh Express bagged salad

Where: Vons

Regular price: \$3.99

Vons sale: .99 cents

Online coupon: \$1 off

Total bill: \$0

Product: John Frieda shampoo

Where: Target

Regular price: \$4.99 each

Manufacturer's coupon: \$3 off each

toilet paper or the man with 1,000 tubes of toothpaste.

But she and a friend donated the \$1,000 worth of products to the Marjaree Mason Center and the Fresno Rescue Mission last month.

"Everything that we donated we received for free and we just paid sales tax on, or we made money on" via register rewards that shoppers can use like cash in the store, Dote said.

Many shoppers give up on coupons when they realize generic versions are often cheaper even without coupons. But extreme couponers say there is a method for even bigger savings than buying generics.

They troll blogs and websites devoted to couponing and visit multiple stores.

They combine manufacturer and store coupons. They hold onto their coupons for future sales they learn about online. And they get money back from drugstore register rewards.

Dote and friend Rebekah Hescox, both stay-at-home moms with five kids between them, started extreme couponing after seeing the show in February. When they realized they could get items for free, they began donating them to charities and families dealing with layoffs.

The friends collect between 20 and 50 Sunday newspapers each week – buying some, collecting some from friends, and asking Starbucks for leftover newspapers.

After the kids go to bed on Mondays, they clip coupons and put together their game plan. Throughout the week they hit up stores, usually one a day.

The two run a couponing blog, fresnocouponing.com, and have started teaching other shoppers how to find deals.

Other couponers look for deals on a smaller scale out of necessity.



Tri
Ro
Unt
2 Rk



Swe
Ju
Ca
Catic



hik



Target coupon: \$3 off any two John Frieda items

Total bill: .98 cents for two, plus sales tax

Savings: \$9

Couponing blogs and websites

FresnoCouponing.com

NerdFamilyThings.com

Sassysaver.com

MyFrugalFinds.com

Hip2save.com

MoneySavingMom.com

SavingtheFamilyMoney.com

TotallyTarget.com



ahead of time so there would be some left after she bought 40 bottles. Since most stores are reimbursed the value of the coupon, plus 8 cents for processing time, Dote said she doesn't see a problem buying a large quantity with coupons.

Next Page

THE REPORTER CAN BE REACHED AT BCLOUGH@FRESNOBEE.COM OR (559) 441-6431.

The Bee's story-comment system is provided by Disqus. To read more about it, see our [Disqus FAQ page](#). If you post comments, please be respectful of other readers. Your comments may be removed and you may be blocked from commenting if you violate our [terms of service](#). Comments flagged by the system as potentially abusive will not appear until approved by a moderator.

Like 1 person liked this.

"I don't have 40 years worth of toilet paper," said Shelley Spencer, a part-time Latin teacher at Fresno High. But she does stock up on items she knows she will use – like the four boxes of 80-load Tide in her cabinet – to get her through to the next sale.

Spencer started extreme couponing more than a year ago when her husband's hours were cut by 20%. The family realized it needed to make financial changes, and Spencer said she now saves about \$100 a month on groceries and household items by couponing.

It takes time, however.

Spencer spends about nine hours a week browsing blogs and websites, clipping coupons and organizing them in a 2-inch binder with clear plastic baseball card holders.

Some local couponers say they know the practice can get on people's nerves. So they try to limit the hassle. Spencer often will warn people behind her in line that her transaction will take a while.

And Dote has worked with store managers to special order a case of body wash

die

C
mc



[Login](#)

Add New Comment



Type your comment here.

Real-time updating is **enabled**. ([Pause](#))

Showing 1-10 of 32 comments

Sort by newest first



Valet Deals

"Couponers spend hours each week following blogs and researching deals" ... well, at least for printable coupons, those days are over. A new online service <http://www.valetdeals.com> drastically reduces the time it takes to find printable coupons you want. This is done by creating you a personalized coupon list (from smartsource, coupons.com, and redplum) that gets updated daily, all based on your interests so no more searching! Did we mention it's free?

06/08/2011 09:20 PM [Report Abuse](#)

[Like](#) [Reply](#)



Melissa Earl

I just wanted to let you know that The Sassy Saver website is wrong. the link is <http://www.thesassysaver.net> If you could fix it that would be great!

06/08/2011 04:50 PM [1 Like](#) [Report Abuse](#)

[Like](#) [Reply](#)



Jody Murray, Content producer for fresnobe.com

Fixed. Thanks!

Jody Murray
Content producer
fresnobe.com

06/09/2011 09:17 AM [in reply to Melissa Earl](#) [Report Abuse](#)

[Like](#) [Reply](#)



Fresno Couponing

Thus sayeth the Sassy Saver herself :-)

06/08/2011 05:26 PM [in reply to Melissa Earl](#) [Report Abuse](#)

[Like](#) [Reply](#)

**Fresno Couponing**

One of the things I feel needs to be stressed is that we really find a lot of these deals so that we can give to the community in need. In fact, one of our more time-sensitive projects involves a partnership with "extreme" couponers in the midwest. We're asking people to buy an extra Sunday paper or two (or get the inserts from neighbors who don't use them) and mail them to the areas affected by the recent tornadoes. Couponers there are using them to stretch donation dollars as far as possible to get as many supplies as possible to the victims of the Joplin tragedy. More information will be posted soon at <http://www.hopefortheheartland...> In the meantime, you can read about it on the Hope for the Heartland page at <http://fresnocouponing.com>

It's really not about hoarding, or expecting things for free. It's about using our resources to get the best deals so that we save money and can give back to the community as a whole.

--Darryl

06/08/2011 12:32 PM 2 Likes Report Abuse

Like Reply

**ridiculous4sure**

Easy way to cut expenses and takes very little time to get what you really need. The only problem are stores (use the term loosely) like CVS and Riteaid that seldom carry items in their sales ad. These drug stores are jokes and should be prosecuted for false advertising----provided we had a government that actually worked and did some. Maybe it's time for a class action suit against both?

06/08/2011 09:50 AM 1 Like Report Abuse

Like Reply

**Fresno Couponing**

I think the key is to work with the stores. Almost every store I've been to offers rainchecks on the items that are in the ad; most of which never expire. What we're finding is that most of the managers are unaware of the upcoming sales, so when they order, they don't take sale items into account. It was only when we started working with the managers of local stores that they have started having enough on hand. If you're having trouble finding something, you can always post on our blog and ask -- if we or one of our readers finds it, we'll share it. :-)

06/08/2011 03:33 PM in reply to ridiculous4sure Report Abuse

Like Reply

**jojo4fun2001**

Why do you all sit here and complain about people using good sense? If you don't have time, to do it, then you don't! For crying out loud, is there not one thing that people can just have a good opinion about? Not only are they using this stuff for their families, they give to others, and they are giving this stuff to charity too, but yet you are crying "awww, the games, the prices" blah blah blah!

06/08/2011 08:18 AM 5 Likes Report Abuse

Like Reply

**Fresno Couponing**

Thanks, jojo4fun-- [AdChoices](#)

We appreciate your comment! One of the main things I said to Bethany, that didn't make it in the article was:

Coupon to save money for your family. Buy what you NEED. If coupons and time allow you to get a little more, please do not horde and donate to those families in need or shelters and the homeless.

--Jen

06/08/2011 08:28 AM in reply to jojo4fun2001 1 Like Report Abuse Like Reply



janbalcom

Wouldn't it be lovely if all retailers charged a reasonable mark-up on all products and quit all the stupid games, coupons, and manipulative marketing practices? No one would score great bargains and no one would be paying the excessive "regular prices" of today that support all that marketing garbage? Sigh. The price I pay for an item should not be determined by whether I'm willing and good at playing the shopping games.

06/08/2011 08:02 AM 2 Likes Report Abuse Like Reply

* [Subscribe by email](#) . [RSS](#)

1 2 ... 4 Next →

[Business Plan Templates !](#)
Business specific business plans
<http://PlanMagic.com>

[Certified Life Coach \\$797](#)
Become a Certified Coach in 16 hrs
Online Classes Weekly
FowlerWainwright.com/Free-Webinar

[Confirm lec](#)
E-Verify che
secure and f
www.dhs.gov

Featured Advertisers

Current Mortgage Rates	Mortgage Quotes	Lobby Furniture
quickbook	Payday Loans	Temporary office space
CFP Certification	small business voip	

SITE MAP

SERVICES	LOCAL NEWS	SPORTS	ENTERTAINMENT	LIFE	OPINION
Archives	Local	Local	Local	Local	Our opinions
E-Bee	State	High school	Fun & Games	Home & garden	Valley opinions
Subscribe	Nation & World	Bulldogs	Horoscopes	Food	Letters to the e
Advertise	Politics	Bulldogs football	Movies	Faith & values	Submit a letter
Contact Us	Business	College sports	Music	Scoopy Squad	Submit a Valle
RSS Feeds	Data center	Outdoors	Television	Teens	Voice
Online Store	Special reports	Fishing	Theater & Arts	Columnists	Columnists
Mobile Edition	Columnists	Columnists	Columnists	Moms	Editorial Carto

Orbotronic Divinator	Obituaries	MLB NFL	Calendar	Blog	Professional Services
	Blog	NHL NBA	Submit event		Real Estate
	Weather	Blog	Blog		Rentals
					Yard Sales

[Terms of Service](#) / [Privacy Policy](#) / [About our ads](#) / [Copyright](#)

Also online

[Videos](#) / [Fresno Beehive](#) / [CentralValleyMoms.com](#) / [Clovis Independent](#) / [Fresno Famous](#) / [Vida en el V](#)



Contents of this site are © Copyright The Fresno Bee. All rights reserved.