

Money Making Mama

Mini

MYSTERY SHOPPING BASICS



Money Making Mama Mini Presents: Mystery Shopping Basics

By Rayven Perkins

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About the Author

Rayven Perkins is the author/webmaster of <http://www.stay-a-stay-at-home-mom.com> a website which focuses on the three critical strategies to surviving off one-income in a two-income society:

- Reduce Expenses
- Stretch Your Dollar
- Supplement Income

Rayven has stayed home with her children for over 12 years. She is a webmaster, wife, work-at-home mom to two preteens, three-time surrogate mother, and network marketing professional.

Her flagship website, *Stay a Stay at Home Mom*, features a variety of resources that are designed to help each mom find her unique path towards staying home.

From Extreme Couponing and Frugality to Mystery Shopping and Direct Sales, moms can feel confident that the information contained on the site, presented in a no-nonsense, honest way, can help them achieve their goals.

Sign up for updates from *Stay a Stay at Home Mom* and receive free information on ways to save money and make money in order to stay a stay at home mom:

<http://www.stay-a-stay-at-home-mom.com/sahm-newsletter.html>

Mystery Shopping Basics

How to Get Started as a Secret Shopper

Welcome to the Mystery Shopping Basics e-course! If it is your goal to become an A-list mystery shopper, you are in the right place! Our mission is to transform you from mystery shopping newbie to a bon-a-fide mystery shopping pro the RIGHT way.

The Basics

First, we tackle the most basic of questions: What is mystery shopping?

It's all quite simple, actually. Consumer businesses (any place that provides goods or services for people) rely on their employees to be the face of the company as they interact with customers. Naturally, those companies want to make sure that their customers are receiving the best possible service from the moment they step foot in their establishment to the moment they walk out.

Enter mystery shoppers. Mystery shoppers are secret customers hired by the company to covertly evaluate customer service and, in doing so, identifying both strengths and weaknesses in their businesses.

It's important to realize that the retail establishment will not hire mystery shoppers; they hire a firm, who takes care of the shopping. You'll be applying to the firms, aka, mystery shopping companies, to do mystery shopping.

Now for another likely question: Who can become a mystery shopper? Nearly anyone! The main requirements to become a mystery shopper are that you be at least 18 years old, have a good grasp of the English language, have good writing skills, and be able to meet deadlines. While some shops do require specific demographics, most of them are open to all.

Now, time for a little myth-busting. I'm sure you've heard that mystery shoppers get paid hundreds of dollars an hour and have to do practically no work. "It's easy! Simple! Effortless!" they say.

Sorry to burst your bubble, but that's simply not true. There is a lot of work involved and the pay is usually \$7-15 a shop, with possible freebies. I tell you this not to discourage you (mystery shopping is fun!) but to give you a realistic expectation. However, if you keep this fact in mind as you move forward, life as a mystery shopper can be quite rewarding.

Tools of the Trade

Ok, so now that we have answered some basic questions and effectively disabused you of a common myth concerning mystery shopping, let's discuss the equipment you need to start your journey as a mystery shopper. Don't worry; you don't need a bunch of stuff, but you may need to invest in an item or two.

Transportation

First off, you will need reliable transportation to and from your shops. This may seem like common sense, but many people are part of a one-car family or rely on public transportation. These individuals will need to really consider if mystery shopping is the right path for their situation.

Why, you ask? Remember earlier when I said that you have to be able to meet deadlines? Typically a deadline means that something needs to be done BY a certain date. In the mystery shopping world, shops often need to be done ON a certain date and at a certain time. If you do not have reliable transportation, this may become an issue for you, which will make it likely that you will be passed over for future shops.

Computer

Obviously, if you are reading this message right now, you have access to a computer and the internet. Once you enter the world of mystery shopping, it is important that you check your email at least twice a day to see if you have had any assignment offers. This industry is extremely time sensitive.

Fax Machine

Most mystery shopping assignments that require you to make a purchase also require you to fax in your receipt within 24 hours. If you have access to a fax machine or have one in your home, you're set. But if not, you need to figure out a solution right now. As you continue your mystery shopping career and become an A-List Shopper, you'll probably want to invest in a fax machine in your home.

Watch with a Second Hand

As funny as it sounds, when I first started mystery shopping, I didn't own a watch! I had to go out and buy one with a second hand so that I could time various tasks as specified by the shops I was doing. Of course many cell phones these days have apps that allow you to time something to the second, so if this is more convenient, go for it. Either way, you need access to some sort of timing device. As you can see, there is really not too much equipment involved in becoming a mystery shopper! These things will get you started.

Getting Your Foot in the Door

Ok, so now that you have all the materials you will need, let's jump right in and talk about applying to companies and getting hired.

Before we begin let me say one thing: NEVER pay money for a list of mystery shopping companies. If anyone is telling you that you need to THEY ARE LYING. The best, most complete list of mystery shopping companies can be found for free at: volition.com/mystery.html

(Note: I am not affiliated in any way with Volition. They're just the best, most complete list of mystery shopping companies online. And I promise I will always "keep it real" for you.)

Now, let's talk about applying to companies. First, make sure you open a separate mystery shopping email account. Why? You'll be getting a lot of mail from companies, and you really want to keep it separate from your regular email. Get a free gmail.com address from Google.

Next, you'll need to go through Volition's list and apply to every single company that offers shops in your area. This will probably take you a couple weeks to go through the whole list. Don't worry! You should start getting job offers before that.

On the Job

Congratulations! You've started your mystery shopping career! You've done your research, you've applied to companies, and now you've got your first shop. Now you're ready to actually complete your first mystery shopping assignment.

Accept Shop

First, if you haven't done so already, go in and accept the shop in the company's system. Many companies only give shoppers a few hours to accept a shop before they offer it to another shopper. Remember, time is of the essence!

Read Instructions

Now that you're the shopper, go in and carefully read over the instructions for your shop. The instructions will tell you things like the day and time you must complete your shop and what specific information you need to pay attention to. Print your report for referencing at this point. Attention to detail and the ability to follow instructions "to the tee" is critical in this industry.

Take Quiz

Many companies ask their shoppers to take a quiz when working with a new establishment. This is just to make sure that you've fully read the instructions and know how it all works.

Do Shop

The really important thing here is to make sure you are shopping on the correct day at the correct time (you'd be amazed how many people get this wrong!). Follow the instructions for your report and make sure you answer all the questions.

Submit Report

As soon as you possibly can, go home and enter your report online as required by the mystery shopping provider. Remember to provide details and to follow instructions as precisely as possible. Even the most seemingly insignificant mistake can cost you.

Fax Receipt

Fax your receipt to the mystery shopping company as required.

Wait for the Cash

That's it! You're done! Now you sit back and wait for your payment. This could take 30-90 days on average.

Moving on Up

So you've scored your first mystery shop! Congratulations! Now, however, you need to make sure you do what it takes to get hired again!

My husband and I have a saying. There are really only two things as an employee you need to do in order to make a good impression, secure your job, and qualify for promotions. Those two critical tasks one must maintain?

1. Show Up on Time
2. Do What You're Told

Sounds simple, right? It's actually amazing how few people actually do that. Mystery shopping is no different!

If you want to get assigned another shop, just do it when scheduled, and according to the specifications of the mystery shopping company. Believe it or not, but this will put you far above most of the new shoppers mystery shopping companies deal with on a daily basis.

Danger!!!

The time has come to talk about scams designed to prey on new mystery shoppers. Chances are, if you spend any time in this industry, you will come across one. Just follow these tips and you'll be fine.

The main scam to mystery shoppers is a Nigeria scheme that will arrive in your email inbox. It will tell you that you have been hired as a shopper for a company you have never heard of, auditing the wire transfer protocols of a bank, or something similar. They will send you a check for \$3,000+, instructing you to keep \$100-500 for yourself and wire the remainder to them.

The problem is that the check is a very good forgery, not a real check, and the money you wire them will come out of your personal account. And yes, the bank will let you do it.

Now, it's really easy to avoid these scams by following these rules to mystery shopping:

First, you will NEVER be paid in advance for a mystery shop.

These scams rely on giving you money in advance to convince you to wire transfer funds. No mystery shopping company is going to entrust you with several thousands of dollars in the hopes that you will send it back to them!

Second, you will NEVER be paid hundreds and hundreds of dollars for a mystery shop.

Third, you will NEVER be required to send any money to a mystery shopping company for any reason.

If you get one of these emails, just delete it. Under no circumstances should you reply to such an email, as then the scammers will know yours is a valid email address, and they will try even more scams on you. Just hit the delete button, move on with your day, and try not to take it personally.

So...that's the ugly side of mystery shopping. Lucky for you, you have me to teach you all the things to avoid.

Making it to the Big-Time

You've probably heard rumors about people who get paid to go to amusement parks, eat expensive meals, or even to go on cruises. Do these shops really exist? Yes! They do!

I went to Disney World so many times for free I got bored, ate so many movie star quality meals I got spoiled, and have gone to museums and attractions across the country many times.

So why are these mysterious shops so, well, mysterious? They are referred to as mysterious because you won't find them on a typical mystery shopping job board. These lucrative and highly coveted shops are offered on a one-on-one basis to A-list shoppers.

...Want to learn the ins and outs of mystery shopping?

...Eager to hear insider tips on how to get the best shops out there?

...Dying to know how you can have companies knocking on YOUR door and not the other way around?

If so, you are in for a treat!

Learn how you can make the best of your career as a mystery shopper from someone who has successfully made it onto the A-list and who has over a decade of successful mystery shopping experience.

[How to Become an A-List Mystery Shopper](#)

If you are brand new to the industry, this book will help you to jumpstart a profitable career as a mystery shopper. If you already have some experience with mystery shopping, it will teach you how to kick things into high gear.



I really hope you have enjoyed this info about mystery shopping. Now go out and make some money!

Rayven