

Who Needs Help? 3 Ways to Know



Are You an Overshopper?

Shopping can be a source of self-definition, self-expression, creativity, even healing. Done to excess, however, it can spin out of control and lead to serious problems, eroding rather than enhancing your quality of life. The more you use shopping as an attempt to fill an inner void, manage your feelings, repair your mood, or pursue a “perfect” image, the more likely it is that you need to take a closer look at what this behavior is costing you and whether or not you need help.

Here are three ways to look at the question “Am I an overshopper?” Your own instincts, unless they’re being thwarted by denial, already suggest that the question is an important one for you. The three approaches below, each taking a somewhat different tack, will help you navigate your way to a clearer understanding of whether or not you’re a problem shopper. And if you are, the final section will guide you toward the kind of help most suited to you.



ShopaholicNoMore.com

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1. Questions To Ask Yourself

Look at the questions below and answer them honestly "Yes" or "No."

Behavior

- Do you often go on buying binges? Yes _____ No _____
- Do you find yourself spending more time or money buying on the Internet, in catalogues, or on the shopping channels than you want to? Yes _____ No _____
- Does money burn a hole in your pocket? Yes _____ No _____

Reasons Why and When

- Do you go shopping to make yourself feel better? Yes _____ No _____
- Do you often buy things because you think they'll make you more like your ideal image? Yes _____ No _____
- Does something inside of you sometimes push you to shop? Yes _____ No _____
- Do you shop to avoid doing something else in your life? Yes _____ No _____

Feelings Before, During, and After

- Do you go on buying binges when you're lonely, anxious, disappointed, depressed, or angry? Yes _____ No _____
- Do you feel "high" when you go on a buying binge? Yes _____ No _____
- Do you feel anxious, guilty, or ashamed after a buying binge? Yes _____ No _____

Impulsive/Compulsive/Addictive Aspects

- Do you buy things even though you don't need or can't afford them? Yes _____ No _____
- Do you ever feel agitated, irritable, or on edge when you haven't been able to buy something? Yes _____ No _____
- Have you tried to stop overspending but been unable to? Yes _____ No _____

Financial Consequences

- Do you find yourself making more and more use of credit [acquiring more cards, increasing your credit limit, etc.]? Yes _____ No _____
- Have any of your purchases ever resulted in legal problems or problems with your bank? Yes _____ No _____
- Do you worry about your spending habits but still go out and spend money shopping? Yes _____ No _____

Other Consequences

- Are your relationships with family and friends suffering because of your buying? Yes _____ No _____
- Has the craving to buy something ever caused you to miss a social engagement? Yes _____ No _____
- Has your job performance suffered because of your buying? Yes _____ No _____

Denial, Avoidance, and Shame

- Do you hide your purchases and shopping trips from family or friends? Yes _____ No _____
- Are you not opening your mail or answering your phone because you don't want to face the consequences of your buying? Yes _____ No _____
- Do you not know, or not want to admit, how much you shop? Yes _____ No _____

Number of "Yes" answers: _____ Number of "No" answers: _____

Calculating Your Score

Each of these questions has been answered "Yes" by some compulsive buyers. *Ultimately, only you can decide whether your buying is a problem and, if so, whether it's enough of a problem to require help.* But even a single "Yes" answer on this list *could* suggest that you're an overshopper. Take the next two assessments and see how you score. Then at the end of the report, we'll talk about what to do next.

2. The Valence Compulsive Buying Scale

[From Valence, Gilles, Alain d'Astous, and Louis Fortier, "Compulsive Buying: Concept and Measurement," *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 11 (1998), 419-433.] © Valence. D'Astous & Fortier.

Please express the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
Please place an X on the line that best indicates how you feel about each statement.

	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
When I have money, I cannot help but spend part or all of it.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I often buy something I see, without planning, just because I have to have it.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
For me, shopping is a way of facing the stress of my daily life and relaxing.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I sometimes feel that something inside pushed me to go shopping.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
There are times when I have a strong urge to buy.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
At times, I've felt somewhat guilty after buying a product, because it seemed unreasonable.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
There are some things I buy that I do not show to anybody because I'm afraid people will think I wasted my money.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I often have an unexplainable urge, a sudden and spontaneous desire, to go and buy something.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
As soon as I enter a shopping center or mall, I have an irresistible urge to go into a shop and buy something.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I have often bought a product that I did not need, even when I knew I had very little money left.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I like to spend money.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Calculating Your Score

Each X that you placed corresponds to a number: 5 for "strongly agree," 4 for "somewhat agree," 3 for "neither agree nor disagree," 2 for "somewhat disagree," and 1 for "strongly disagree." Add up the 11 numbers for your Xs to get your total scale score. If it's 36 or higher, you are likely to be a compulsive buyer.

3. The Richmond Compulsive Buying Scale

[From: Ridgway, Nancy M., Monika Kukar-Kinney, and Kent B. Monroe, "An Expanded Conceptualization and a New Measure of Compulsive Buying," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (4: 2008), 350-406.]

Please choose the response that best describes you.

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. My closet has unopened shopping bags in it.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Others might consider me a shopaholic.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Much of my life centers on buying things.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. I consider myself an impulse purchaser.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	Never						Very Often
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I buy things I don't need.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. I buy things I did not plan to buy.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Calculating Your Score

Each X that you placed again corresponds to a number.
Add up the 6 numbers for your Xs to get your total score.
If it's 25 or above, you almost surely need help.



What's the Next Step?

Are you someone who learns easily from reading a book, listening to a tape, or working through an online program? If so, go to <http://www.shopaholicnomore.com/self-help/>

Are you someone who learns best from talking with and having the support of others who are grappling with the same issue? If so, then go to <http://www.shopaholicnomore.com/professional-help/#groupprogram> to read about the group coaching and therapy we offer and go to <http://www.shopaholicnomore.com/resources-for-overshoppers-families-and-friends/other-resources-for-overshoppers/> to read about in-person and online support groups.

Are you someone who does best when you work individually with a specialized, trained professional? If so, then go to <http://www.shopaholicnomore.com/professional-help/> to learn about the individual coaching and therapy we offer and for a list of professionals we've trained.

I wish you safe passage on your journey toward stopping overshopping. **Remember: you can never get enough of what you don't really need.**

Warm regards,

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