

Ways to save

How to watch films, eat out or buy goods cheaply, or even for free

1 Time for a bargain

The next couple of months is a good time to shop for bargains on many popular products. For example, you'll find promotions and discounts on stationery, printers and ink in July and August as children and students prepare for the new academic year, and shops compete for their business.

You may also see shops offering cut-price deals on laptops, mobile phones and computer software as September approaches. Check out our comprehensive Which? reviews of mobile phones, desktop computer brands and reliable broadband providers to find out those that are Which? Best Buys.

Our guide www.which.co.uk/backtoschool includes a list of essentials to ensure your child is ready early for the new term.



2 Learn to haggle

Many people are reluctant to haggle for goods, but our survey of Which? online members found that most of those who do get money off products, from dishwashers to tents.

See www.which.co.uk/haggling.

3 Cheaper books

Book chain Waterstone's is currently holding a sale up to 40% off a range of titles including bestsellers, new releases and crime novels.

These include Barack Obama's *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, reduced from £8.99 to £4.



4 Cheaper meals out

If you dine with a friend, you can buy one main meal and get a second for 99p at the Zizzi chain of restaurants between Sunday and Thursday.

See www.zizzioffers.co.uk. The offer is valid until 31 May.

See also the website www.toptable.co.uk for further deals.

5 Two-for-one meal

If you are quick you can take advantage of a two-for-one offer on main meals at Pizza Express (the cheaper of the two dishes is free).

The deal ends on Friday, 24 May and is available between Sunday and Friday.



6 Free Wi-Fi

The list of high-street venues offering free Wi-Fi internet access is expanding all the time. Many branches of Starbucks, McDonald's and Costa Coffee, Pret a Manger and JD Wetherspoon's pubs let you use your wireless laptop free of charge. Websites such as www.myhotspots.co.uk and wifi.lycos.co.uk are good for current lists. Visit www.which.co.uk/mobile-broadband to find out more about mobile broadband services that let you surf the net when you're out and about.



7 Free music online

There has been a lot of fuss about people illegally listening to music online.

However, a service launched recently allows you to listen legitimately and at no cost. Spotify (www.spotify.com) is an online music streaming service.

This means that as long as you have a broadband internet connection, all you have to do is log on to the website to play music that it carries. Unlike iTunes and similar services, none of the music is actually downloaded to your computer or stored on it.

The service is legal and free as the artists are paid royalties for the music you choose to listen to. Major record labels that have signed up to have their music distributed through Spotify include Universal, EMI, Warner Music and AMG.

8 Cheaper fares

Megabusplus, a new transport service, offers fares from £1 for journeys between Yorkshire cities and towns such as York, Leeds and Harrogate to London. Unusually the journey is by bus between Yorkshire and East Midlands Parkway Train Station, then by train to London. Journey times are longer than for a train-only service (but a lot cheaper) and significantly quicker than taking the coach. For more, see www.megabusplus.com.

9 Travel for £1

National Express is offering coach fares from £1 each way on more than 180

12 Free films to download

You can download films free and legally at the Internet Movie Archive (www.archive.org/details/movies and films).

The films that are available to download include classic such as Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (pictured left) and George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, along with more curious items, such as old advertisements and public information broadcasts.

13 Cheaper DVDs

The site www.lovefilm.com is currently running a sale with many films at under £5, such as *A Knight's Tale* (was £12.79, now £2.93). *Confetti* (was £15.79, now £2.93). And don't forget our review of online DVD rental sites, which you can find at www.which.co.uk/rentaldvds.

LOVEFiLM.com

routes. These are only available online from www.national.express.com.

You can have your ticket emailed or sent to your mobile but you can't ask for it to be posted or collected from a National Express outlet.



10 Use less water

As part of a government scheme to reduce the amount of energy we use, a free eaga ShowerSmart is available to selected eligible homes. The idea of it being free is so that the government and energy suppliers can work towards achieving energy-saving targets.

The eaga ShowerSmart is suitable for all non-electric showers and regulates the flow rate of a shower to 7.8 litres a minute – the equivalent of a powerful electric shower

For mains-pressure showers (where hot water comes from a combi-boiler or similar), this saves both water and the

associated energy with heating hot water. It is claimed that, for a two-person household, the eaga ShowerSmart will typically save more than 12,000 litres per year, cut carbon emissions by a tonne of CO2 over its lifetime and save about £20 on gas and £20 on water bills (where metered) a year.

For the average family, this would equate to savings of about £30 off their gas bills and over £30 off their water bills (where metered) per year.

11 Free information

Following on from last month's feature on local libraries, it is worth pointing out a little-known free national enquiry service.



A trained librarian is available online 24 hours a day, seven days a week to answer any question you care to ask, at www.askalibrarian.org.uk.

You can ask any question you like from the most technical to the most whimsical.

The service has been used by people researching their family history or just looking for an answer to a crossword clue.

There are two ways that you can ask your question online. Using instant messaging you can talk to a librarian in real time or you can get your answer back by email – during a live session library staff can send web pages relating to your information.

The service was commissioned by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

14 Learn to play an instrument

If you are or someone you know is interested in learning a musical instrument, the Arts Council's Take It Away scheme allows you to borrow up to £2,000 interest free to buy an instrument.

You pay the money back in nine monthly installments completely interest free.

Anyone aged over the age of 18 can apply. Parents can apply on behalf of children.

Visit www.artscouncil.org.uk/takeitaway to find out more.



Which? Money

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