**Why Black Friday Is “Black”**

Contrary to popular belief, Black Friday didn’t derive its name from the idea that the holiday shopping season moves retailers from being “in the red” (experiencing losses) to being “in the black” (showing profits).

Media reports from 1966 reveal that police officers in Philadelphia first referred to the day after Thanksgiving as “Black Friday” because of the increased traffic jams and large amounts of pedestrian traffic in the city’s shopping district. For Philadelphia police, bus drivers, cab drivers, and others who tried to control and navigate the shopping hordes, the day was bleak – and, therefore, “black.”

However, retailers didn’t like the negative connotations surrounding such an important shopping day. Alternative stories about Black Friday began to emerge in the 1980s. Today, shoppers believe that retailers’ balance sheets move into the black on the day after Thanksgiving, and accept the idea that Black Friday is a retail holiday.

**Black Friday’s Popularity Growth**

Interestingly, the day after Thanksgiving has only recently become the biggest shopping day of the year. Between 1993 and 2001, it ranked between fifth and tenth on the list of the busiest shopping days. In fact, for years, the busiest shopping day was usually the Saturday before Christmas.

But things changed in 2002. That was the year Black Friday took the lead, and it has remained the busiest shopping day of the year ever since, with the exception of 2004 when it was second. Experts speculate that shopping on the day after Thanksgiving has become more popular because many people have the day off, stores offer extended hours, and almost every store seems to have a sale on the day after Thanksgiving.

## Black Friday Today

### The Urgency of Black Friday

Black Friday is an ingrained part of our collective shopping culture, and as such, there is a great deal of hype surrounding limited quantity doorbusters, which can offer up to 80% off retail prices. Shoppers can only get these special deals at the very beginning of the sales, right when the doors open. Moreover, major retailers create a sense of urgency by offering special deals to draw the crowds into stores even after doorbusters have sold out.

Some of these additional methods that stores employ to create urgency include:

* Advertising ridiculously low prices on certain items
* Offering special sales for limited hours during the day
* Limiting the number of items available for purchase at the special price
* Offering additional loss leaders, merchandise priced lower than actual cost

Retailers design these methods to encourage consumers who hope to find once-in-a-lifetime deals to flock to the stores. The stores hope that shoppers will stick around and buy full-priced items in addition to pillaging their discounted merchandise.

Some stores open at midnight on Thanksgiving night, while others open between 2AM and 5AM. [Black Friday camping](https://www.moneycrashers.com/black-friday-shopping-deals-lines-camping-supplies-gear/) has become popular as shoppers line up for doorbusters up to a day in advance of stores opening.

Lastly, with the advent of the Internet, stores have begun to release their flyers online as a way to further create excitement and urgency well in advance of Black Friday. Fortunately, these pre-releases of doorbuster and sale information has also allowed enthusiastic consumers to determine the best deals and carefully plan shopping routes before the big day arrives.

### The Consequences of Black Friday

Unfortunately, Black Friday has also come to represent the consumer excesses of our society and [addiction to consumer electronics](https://www.moneycrashers.com/are-we-addicted-to-consumer-electronics/). News reports on the day after Thanksgiving feature hordes of crazed shoppers, desperate for deals. While in the vast majority of stores volatile behavior is usually limited to shoving and rude comments, there have been more serious incidents reported, including trampling deaths.

In 2008, the first death attributed to Black Friday fanaticism was recorded at a Walmart in Valley Stream, New York. Stampeding shoppers trampled an employee to death. Consumers refused to stop their rush when store employees tried to help their coworker, ultimately contributing to the man’s demise. Shoppers also buffeted the police officers who arrived to help.

The incident illustrates how ugly ordinary people can become when frenzied by consumerism and materialism. Shoppers who do not exercise caution could find themselves in danger. Reports of fist fights, stabbings, and gun threats have all occurred at stores on the retail holiday. [Safe shopping on Black Friday](https://www.moneycrashers.com/black-friday-tips-for-safe-shopping/) is important – be sure to exercise caution.

## Final Word

Some people enjoy the Black Friday experience. Getting up early or eschewing bedtime altogether to stand in line at a store to get a good bargain can be exciting. Plus, the savings can make standing in line and missing a few hours of shut-eye worthwhile. Many bargain hunters accomplish their Christmas shopping in one day and save a bundle.

These days, however, you have other shopping options to avoid the turmoil. Many retailers begin offering deals on Thanksgiving Day or earlier. Forget braving the cold and crowds; you can get spectacular shopping deals online without having to get dressed or stressed, especially on Cyber Monday. In addition to the reduced retail rates, you can often receive free shipping when you shop online during the holiday season.

Before you head to the malls on the day after Thanksgiving, consider your options. Will you really get a good deal? How much time do you want to spend in traffic, in line outside the store, and waiting for your turn at the check-out stand?

In addition, make sure to carefully consider whether you can find a better bargain online. This year, you may not have to leave home at all to get the best deals on Christmas gifts.

**Cyber Monday** is a marketing term for the Monday after the [Thanksgiving](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanksgiving_%28United_States%29) holiday in the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States). The term "Cyber Monday" was created by marketing companies to persuade people to [shop online](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_shopping). The term was coined by [Ellen Davis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellen_Davis_%28businesswoman%29) and Scott Silverman,[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyber_Monday#cite_note-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyber_Monday#cite_note-2) and made its debut on November 28, 2005 in a Shop.org press release entitled "'Cyber Monday Quickly Becoming One of the Biggest Online Shopping Days of the Year".[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyber_Monday#cite_note-Cyber_Monday-3)

The deals on Cyber Monday are online only and generally offered by smaller retailers that cannot compete with the big retailers. [Black Friday](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Friday_%28shopping%29) generally offers better deals on technology, with nearly 85% more data storage deals than Cyber Monday. The past Black Fridays saw far more deals for small appliances, cutlery, and kitchen gadgets on average than Cyber Monday. Cyber Monday is larger for fashion retail. On the past two Cyber Mondays, there were an average of 45% more clothing deals than on Black Friday. There were also 50% more shoe deals on Cyber Monday than on Black Friday.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyber_Monday#cite_note-5) Cyber Monday has become an international marketing term used by online retailers across the world.