

CHEAP CHIC



THE LOWDOWN ON MAKEUP PURCHASES: A Cosmetic-Counter Sales Chick Offers Tips for Avoiding Costly Mistakes

Most of us can recognize a clearance sign even if we're steering the car with the top of our knee, while one hand is holding the phone and the other hand is jotting down today's grocery list. Unfortunately, cosmetics never go on sale unless you're using your CVS bonus card. Here are a few tips that can make your cosmetic-counter experience much less painful than an eyebrow waxing and easier on your wallet. They come from one who knows. My day job is selling cosmetics for a name brand.

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think that some women feel obligated to buy something, if they sit down in a makeup artist's chair and have a full face put on. The confident woman will graciously thank the makeup artist for her time and leave empty-handed if she isn't totally sold, even after having everything from lipstick to brow color applied. If you really aren't sure about a new lip color or eye shadow and need some time to think, walk around the store and come back an hour later. Or ask for a sample and experiment with it at home.

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If you don't like it, don't be pressured into buying it! When you absolutely hate the makeup, please don't even think that you will learn to love it. If you take it home, it's going to end up in that makeup drawer with all the other items you've bought and don't use. I've worked in a privately owned boutique, and I can't tell you how many people I have had walk into my store minutes after they've shelled out hundreds of dollars at another makeup counter on products they were already unhappy with. They're suffering from instant buyer's remorse.

The most common request is, "Please help me!" Don't let yourself be pressured into buying anything just because an artist spent more than an hour doing your makeup, and chatted you up. I repeat: if you are less than satisfied with the makeup, please don't buy it. You'd be surprised at how many saleswomen would rather hear an honest answer than ring up a big sale and see you come back a day later, returning everything.

Bring visuals. Whenever I ask a customer what colors they normally use,

whether it's blush, eye shadow or lipstick, I always hear, "Oh, whatever you think looks good on me. You're the expert." Tell them exactly what you want and exactly what you want to avoid. Bring a picture along, too—something you've torn out of a magazine, or a photo of someone you think looks great or simply awful. This helps avoid guesswork. Pictures are especially useful when you're going for a wedding makeup consultation. They'll help the artist pick out colors that will match your bridal party dresses.

Be cautious of add-ons. Good saleswomen will demonstrate between five and six products. This gives them leeway. They know that if you don't take all the products, there's a good chance that you'll walk away with at least three. Most UPT (units per transaction) goals are set at three products per customer. A common sales ploy is making the customer think she needs 10 different brushes to put on eye shadow, blush or foundation. Trust me, you don't need all of those brushes. To reduce costs, ask whether there are cheaper brush kits or double-ended brushes with dual uses.

Application is everything. You know how you go to the hair salon, get this awesome new style,

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one brush being used versus the other? Switch places with the artist and let her watch you apply the makeup to see if you are doing it correctly. As nice as it would be to have a personal makeup

artist, you are going to have to recreate the desired look yourself later, so take notes! Request a brochure or catalogue describing application techniques.

Don't believe the hype. Today's generation is label-obsessed. Even with all my exposure to high-end products, I'm more interested in paying for something that works than something that has a chic-sounding foreign name. I've received more compliments on a lipstick that I bought from Sears than on all my other fancy lipsticks combined! —Tara Civitaresse



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