

Psych experts and economists have uncovered some seriously wacky reasons we spend more than we plan to. But you can retrain your brain. Alexa helps show you how.

**YOU'RE CARRYING ONES**

Economists call it the denomination effect: When you have small bills, you're more apt to spend them on little stuff. On the other hand, you wouldn't break a \$50 or a \$100 bill to buy a pack of gum or a soda. Keep singles and fives out of your wallet, and stick to larger bills.

**THE PRICE ENDS IN NINE**

Retailers love to end a price with the number nine. Why? Customers associate nines with getting a deal, because it always feels like less than the number above it. When researchers at the University of Chicago priced women's clothing at \$34, \$39, and \$44, customers were 35 percent more likely to buy the one that cost \$39 than the other two options. Try rounding up and then see how you feel about the price.

**YOU SKIPPED BREAKFAST**

Hunger triggers a surge in the hormones ghrelin and leptin, which send signals to the parts of your brain involved in decision making. The change in body chemistry makes us more risk-inclined, especially with money. So never shop on an empty stomach. Even if you're bikini shopping.



This one's for you, Blair.

# CASHING IN THE WEIRD REASONS YOU OVERSPEND

What do \$5 bills, Facebook, and the number nine all have in common? They're making you go broke!

**YOU CHECKED THE TAG**

Retailers know you'll be swayed by the first price that you see, thanks to the anchoring effect. Your first reference point is the "anchor." Let's say the tag on a jacket says \$200. If it's on sale for 50 percent off, you'll think that \$100 is a great deal (even if you'd normally pay only \$60 for a jacket). Think about what you'd be willing to pay for an item—literally have a number in mind—before you check the tag.

**IT WAS GIRLS' NIGHT**

Group dinners are a blast. But we end up spending more than we want to

because of what economists call the freeloader effect, where we assume others will order big, so we order more than we would otherwise so we're not stuck paying up for their splurge. ("I know she'll order an app, entrée, and a second glass of pinot grigio, so I'm having the lobster!") Next time, kick off the meal by saying you're "ordering light" and witness the power of suggestion.

**YOU WERE ON FACEBOOK**

Experiments have shown that a mere five minutes on social networks like Facebook and Instagram lowers your spending self-control. (Sad-face emoji.)

It may be that connecting with friends online bumps up your self-esteem and makes you feel more confident and ready to spend. Or it could be that seeing other people's fabulous lives triggers impulse buys so you feel better about your own status. Either way, don't surf and shop.

**THE \$ WAS MISSING**

Ever notice that some menus don't show dollar signs and instead float numbers (the dish's price) in the margin? When currency symbols are missing, it makes the cost seem abstract, according to a study from Cornell University. And that makes us less likely to freak about how pricey a dish is.

**IT WAS A ONE-DAY SALE**

Almost half of product advertisements reference time (*Limited Time Offer! Act Now! Sale Ends Today! Only 20 Left!*), according to a Stanford University study. That's because retailers know that if you think a product is about to sell out or a deal is about to expire, you're more likely to pull out your wallet. Take a deep breath, and give yourself 24 hours to make the decision.



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