

by Julie Boston Author of  
CAPTURING WONDERLAND

# How To Thrift Like a Pro

10 BEST STRATEGIES FROM  
A SEASONED HUNTRESS



I love thrifting because I love *the hunt*, the story each piece has, and the challenge of repurposing. From childhood, I got my thrills from digging through the shelves in thrift stores for something special.

Thriftiness is a skill that you can hone and is beneficial for several reasons including financial & earth-friendly!

Not to mention you can't get **vintage** at Target. You can't get a **piece of history** at Ross. When I shop for my home I am looking for something *unique*.

**90%** of the furniture, decor, and household goods in my home are thrifted and I'm *proud* of that. In fact, when we purchased our home in 2012 I made a promise to myself if we needed something I would look for it used first. It's a challenge I actually look forward to!

So, let's see how much money we can save, shall we? Here are 10 Tips to help you Thrift Like A Pro!

# TIP #1

## Know What You're Looking For

*Have a list.*

Either in your head or on paper in your purse. Wherever it is, keep it on you when you go shopping.

*Have an idea.*

A vision is even better. It's easier to avoid wasting money if you already know what you're looking for.





# Some Favorites

I LOOK FOR ARE:

## SOLID WOOD VINTAGE FURNITURE

Dovetail drawers, Turned Legs, &  
Original Hardware.

## ODDITIES

Music Boxes, Vintage Pressed Flowers in  
Frames, Solid Wood Ornate Frames, &  
Old Mantel Clocks

## THINGS I'M CURRENTLY COLLECTING

Pfaltzgraff Heritage dishes, Ironstone  
dishes, Anything Copper, Vintage Acrylic  
Paintings, Linens (with lace or crochet),  
Baskets, & Books (I have a specific list of  
Titles, Authors, & Collections I'm  
building).



## TIP #2

# Know What It's Worth

The prerequisite is you probably will already **know what you're looking for** to *know what it's worth*.

And that's a good thing. Having even a "wish list" is an amazing commodity because you will be well aware when you find an actual *good deal*.

**Knowing what your budget is**, goes hand in hand. Because it doesn't matter what something is worth if you'll never be able to pay that amount.

And going into debt for decor, furniture or home goods is a terrible idea.

## Search & KEEP A TAB ON PRICES IN YOUR AREA.

**Prices** can greatly vary from one part of the country to the other. What some people find for cheap I may or may not ever be able to find in my area in that price range.

Similarly, the **style** of furniture or decor might also depend on the area you live in. *The history* of an area will give a pretty good indication of what you can expect to find in flea markets, antique stores, thrift stores, & even garage sales.

So, going to a more history-rich area might actually increase your chances of finding *the best prices* as well as the type of items you are looking for.



Wish List  
Item



## MARTHA WASHINGTON SEWING TABLE

The price was right at only \$40.

Similar online ran between  
\$200 - \$300 and the least expensive I found  
in my area before this was \$125, *painted*.  
Which meant I would have to refinish it.

## TIP #3

# Put It In Your Cart & Think About It

One of the **biggest regrets** you can have when you're out in the *zone*, treasure hunting, is if you see something you like but are unsure of and walk away to think about it. Then come back and find someone else has taken it. Always put those items in your cart and walk around with them until you make a solid decision.

The second **biggest regret** you will have is if you are unsure of something, but **can't stop thinking about it**. JUST BUY IT. Especially if it's cheap. I can't tell you how awful it is when you lose something because you walked away from it and went back to find it sold.



# For Safe Keeping



I MAY OR MAY NOT  
ACTUALLY BUY THIS ITEM.

But until I decide, no one's going to fight you for it or run to the register to purchase it because they are more impulsive than you are. This allows you to take your time and consider:

*the price, the style, & the time  
it would take to repurpose it, etc.*

## TIP #4

# Try to Look Past the Ugly

THE 3 TYPES OF ITEMS YOU WILL  
FIND WHILE ON THE HUNT:

Already completely ready for use,  
Needs to be cleaned or slightly  
repaired,  
& **A HOT MESS.**

Most people would happily take 1 & 2  
no problem. But some definitely get  
intimidated by 3 and willingly pass  
them by time and time again. This can  
be a **major mistake**. Sure, it's a poor  
unfortunate ugly forgotten thing, but  
its *potential* is untapped and it could  
be yours for a steal. Also, I need to  
mention that it **could be the greatest  
piece you've ever purchased.**



The  
Before  
↪

Some of my most favorite things I have purchased were ones that I got to put my mark on unapologetically because it was basically destroyed to start.

The  
After  
↪



## TIP #5

# Buy Out of Season

THIS TIP IS GREAT FOR ALL  
TYPES OF SHOPPING.

When you purchase out-of-season merchandise you get it at a **steep** discount. I know it isn't as *fun* because it's not exactly what you want at the moment, but this is one of the best ways to get a good deal.

If you pair this tip with, *Try to look past the ugly*, you will begin to build your seasonal collections at a fraction of the cost of purchasing when the season is already upon us.

Maybe you don't decorate for the seasons? That's ok, it's not all about holiday decor.





Another overlooked item. It had candle wax all over it and the natural finish had been ruined from the heat.

SOME ITEMS THAT MIGHT BE CONSIDERED SEASONAL INCLUDE: Linens, Blankets, Throws, Frames & Greenery, to name a few.

A single coat of black chalk paint, distressing, and furniture wax and I think it's beautiful. Someday I will find a key that fits!



## TIP #6

# Visit The Best Spots Often

Some people say,  
"The early bird gets the worm."

Similarly, I say,  
THE BIRD THAT GOES OUT LOOKING  
FOR FOOD EVERYDAY USUALLY EATS  
EVERY DAY.

New items are put out daily and the  
best items will be swiped quickly.

A quick trip every other day or once a  
week will ensure a steady supply of  
those treasures is at your fingertips.

I shop often with my 5 kids, so I go  
every couple of weeks. Or however  
often my sanity affords me.

## TIP #7

# Come Prepared

The worst scenario is you go to a store, you find the perfect piece or a haul of amazing things and *you don't have room for it* because you didn't think ahead.

Myself, shopping with 5 kids, I have very little extra space to work with. So what I do have **needs to be empty.**



# Things I Keep On Hand



## TO BE PREPARED

### ROOF STRAPS

Should I find the perfect vintage solid wood piece of furniture I can easily carry it safely on my roof racks.

### EXTRA CANVAS BAGS

These come in handy for multiple reasons. I typically only bring my wallet, phone & keys in. A mostly empty canvas bag also saves plastic if I am only purchasing a few small items.

### SNACKS & DRINKS

This saves me on a regular basis. I keep a basket in my car of small water bottles, various snacks, & protein bars. I don't have to cut a trip short due to hunger or thirst.



## TIP #8

# Hit Every Section & Skim the Surface

- 1 An employee may put something in the wrong section on accident.
- 2 Customers may put something down in the wrong section.

Not every trip requires a *deep dive*, especially if you are a regular shopper. And there are some sections you may not normally shop in, however, I would encourage you to do a thorough sweep through every section in the store.

With experience, your eyes will be trained to know **the look** of the good stuff. So a quick sweep is usually proficient enough to know you aren't overlooking that golden ticket.

## TIP #9

# Do A Deep Dive

I can't tell you how many unique, interesting, and overlooked items I have found by looking deeper. Some shelves are stacked & packed full and it may be really difficult to actually **see** everything that's there.

So, if I have the time I usually do try to be fairly thorough in my inspection. There are also times when I will look 2 or 3 times in the same spot and find something the 3rd time I didn't see the first 2.

P.S. Don't get discouraged if you dive and still come up empty-handed.

Next time!

## TIP #10

# Be Patient & Persistent

There are definitely dry spells in thrifting. I will go months sometimes without much to show for it.

Then as if the clouds part I will quickly stop in and it seems like treasures are everywhere! I will come home with a **haul** of goodies.

It takes time to create a **curated** home. It takes time to **know what you want** and develop your unique style. Be patient & persistent.

And don't be discouraged if you buy something and then six months later your tastes have changed and you realize you don't actually love it anymore.

## UNICORNS DO EXIST.

Don't fool yourself into believing that you'll *never find* that **one** thing you're looking for at a price you can pay. It happens literally all the time to me. And always when I least expect it.

Over time you almost develop a spidey "thrifting" sense that tingles and tells you, "You should go visit that thrift store today". And you go there and lo and behold something on your wish list is sitting there like a gift for you.

I can't tell you how many rare books I've found for under \$1 randomly, or how many great rare antiques I've found on Facebook Marketplace for pennies.

**KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN &  
DON'T GIVE UP.**



Thank you so much for  
supporting my blog!

Capturing   
Wonderland