



People of all ages enjoy Halloween. It's a fun time to dress up, eat candy and have a lot of fun. But, if you're not careful, those Halloween expenses can take a terrifying toll on your budget! The National Retail Federation estimates that consumers will spend \$7.4 billion on Halloween this year, with the average person shelling out about \$77 on decorations, costumes and candy. Take a look at these money saving tips to save on Halloween costumes, decorations and candy to help keep your empty wallet from shouting "boo!"

### Costumes

The most cost-effective Halloween costume strategy is to make your own. Inexpensive fabrics and free online patterns can help you save a lot of money. However, making your own costume can be a significant time investment. If you would rather buy your costume, shopping early is the best way to get a good deal; in fact, the best prices for "next year" are on November 1 of this year! Use websites to comparison shop and find the best price. Another idea is to start up a costume swap in your neighborhood if there are several other families with children of similar ages, especially if you're attending multiple parties and want different outfits for each.

### Decorations

One great way to save money on Halloween decorations is to get creative and use items you already have around the house. Cereal boxes and cut-up cardboard boxes turn into spooky graves with a little spray paint. You can use quilt padding to make cobwebs if you can't find an inexpensive option at the store. For a frugal decoration and clean-up tool, buy or make pumpkin trash bags to put your fallen leaves in after you rake. Pumpkins are an easy plant to grow, so consider growing your own pumpkins for carving and decorating. If you have to buy pumpkins, you can usually pick them up cheaply - check out farmers' markets for specials. Don't buy your pumpkins in early October, either. They're more prone to rot and will be more expensive than if you wait until a few days before Halloween.

### Candy

The best way to save money on Halloween candy is to buy in bulk at a discount store. As long as you don't eat it all and have to go back out to buy more at the last minute, you can save money by avoiding the grocery stores. It's also a good idea to stick to buying non-chocolate candy from the dollar store. You'll get the most candy for the absolute lowest price. You can also save big by buying generic candy instead of those pricier name brands. You can also cut down on the amount of candy you need to buy by handing it out yourself. If you let the children who ring your doorbell reach into the bucket and pull out candy by the handfuls, you will run out of candy fast! Hand out a couple of pieces to each child.

Overall, the best way to save on Halloween items is by starting really early. In the week following Halloween, shop around for items for next year. You'll be able to find deals like up to 75 percent off on decorations and costumes. Next year, you will be glad you thought ahead, and you will be thankful for the Halloween savings.