# Researching to Find the Best Product

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Before adding a new device to your office, whether it’s a major purchase or a fun gadget, do some research to make sure you get the best product. Most people think of “research” as going to the store and asking the salesman, but there are some other things you can do from the comfort of your home or office. You can get the reviews of experts who have no interest in selling the product, as well as consumers who have already purchased the product.

The Experts
There are lots of sites out there who rate products. For technology I like CNet. They have reviews, many with video, by their editors of new products. They also include reviews from owners of the products. And it’s free. Other sites may require registration or subscription. If you purchase items regularly, subscribing to such a site, like consumerreports.org, might be a worthwhile investment.

Other Consumers
Customer reviews can be very helpful. These people have bought the product and used it. Just because there may be negative reviews, remember, sometimes you get a lemon (and you may notice that a good consumer reviewer will take this into account). Read as many as you can. Negative reviews can be just as helpful. Keep in mind that someone may rank a product poorly for a problem you don’t care about. Like a cell phone that doesn’t have a camera. If you don’t care about having a camera in your phone, this wouldn’t be a problem for you and everything else about the phone might be perfect.

Looking a product up on Amazon is also useful because Amazon shows you what other people who searched that item looked at, how many people bought that item as opposed to similar items, and lists similar items you might be interested. You don’t have to purchase it from Amazon (they’ll even give you the prices for other stores), but they are a huge wealth of information.

Google It
Just type in the name of your item into Google or your favorite search engine, along with the word “review” and see what pops up. You may come across reviews, a wide range of places to buy it (with possibly a wide range of prices), and even its mention in chat forums.

Get a Hands-On Look
As helpful as the Internet can be, at some point you probably want to see the item you are interested in buying in person. So go to a retail store and check it out, get a demo and maybe let a sales person give you their pitch. Don’t feel pressured to purchase anything at that time because you may still want to shop around or find the best prices.

Find the Best Price
Once you’ve chosen your product, make sure you get the best price. Electronics prices can vary significantly. I purchased an add-on to my GPS unit the other day for about $100, but saw it selling for up to $300! This is unusual, however, I have found that there can be a very significant difference in prices for no apparent reason.

Purchasing items online can also save you money. Depending on where you go, you can save the cost of shipping and tax. And as I mentioned before, many sites will give you a list of major online and retail merchants and their prices.

Return the Favor

If you have found consumer reviews helpful, you can always return the favor by writing reviews of your own. If you find a product you really like, or really don’t, you can help other consumers by adding your review. Just make sure you aren’t just rambling on about how great or not-great the item is. Be specific about the pros and cons and as objective as you can be. Look at reviews you have found helpful and try to incorporate the same elements. It feels good to weigh in on a product, and to know you’ve helped someone like yourself looking for good, unbiased information.