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## Chapter One INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for purchasing “Become A Mystery Shopper!” Within this text you’ll learn the ins and outs of becoming a professional Mystery Shopper, how to find assignments, what companies expect of you, scam information, and much, much more!

In my real life, I’m actually a puppeteer. That is what I do, that is what I love. It may surprise you to know that puppeteers don’t make that much money! So I have become “Queen of the Random Job” doing everything I can to make ends meet while still living my passion. I have been a babysitter, and elderly caregiver, I’ve walked dogs, I delivered phone books, I worked for the Census Bureau, I was Ronald McDonald’s bodyguard for Pete’s sake, and yes, I did clean Bill Gates’ toilets...for about a week.

I found out about Mystery Shopping about five years ago in a book, but it didn’t say much, other than to contact local Market Research Companies for more information. I did, and the very first company I called left me quite skeptical.

“Do you do... Mystery Shopping?” I tentatively asked.

“Why yes! Of course we do,” said the voice at the other end of the phone, much like a used car salesman, “All you have to do is pay \$40 to take our class, and YOU can become a Mystery Shopper!”

Right away, I was sure I was going to be scammed. And I HATE being scammed. I don’t know about you, but I did actually sent away \$19.95 so that I could learn how to become a millionaire stuffing envelopes at home. Surprising...that didn’t work out, so I’m always hypersensitive about these “work from home” opportunities. I signed up for the class anyway, and I actually was planning on canceling later on...after all \$40 is a lot of money to a broke puppeteer. But, the very next week, I got a frantic call.

“We have an EMERGENCY SHOP!” said the voice, (and yes, there is such a thing as an “emergency shop”) “Someone was supposed to shop an apartment building, and they canceled, and we need it done and back into the client’s hands by 5 PM TODAY! Can you do it?!?!?”

I, of course, was beside myself... I still didn’t even know what the heck Mystery Shopping was, and here they were wanting me to go out into the real world and DO it?

“Um, ah, but I haven’t even taken your class yet!” I mumbled... terrified of the notion...

“It’s ok,” said my contact, “Have you ever looked for an apartment before?”

And I was thinking, “Of course!” We all have at some point looked for apartments, rooms for rent, new homes, something like that.

“That’s all you have to do! Call the property, talk to a leasing agent over the phone, go to the apartment, evaluate the conditions of the apartment, the conditions of the community, the agent’s closing style, and write up the report!”

I was still uncertain, but she then emailed me a copy of the form, so that I knew exactly what to look for. I headed out to this \$2000 a month apartment community, all the time thinking, “I’m going to get caught... I have no business being in a \$2000 a month apartment. I’m a puppeteer!”

But I didn’t. Somehow I managed to pull through, finish the shop, NOT get caught, and two weeks later got my first check as a Mystery Shopper!

I’ve been shopping ever since.

The great thing about Mystery Shopping is that it can be done anytime, anywhere. You are your own boss. You choose what assignments you want to take and when you want to take them!

Every business that deals with customers has the ability to be shopped! Apartments, banks, retail stores, self-storage facilities, cell-phone providers, airlines, hotels, motels, and resorts, restaurants, bowling alleys, casinos, amusement parks, the post office, child-care providers, weight-loss facilities and more *all* have shopping programs. Shops are conducted in the United States, Canada, and abroad. There are even a host of professional organizations for companies and shoppers to be affiliated with! Mystery Shopping is a *real* business where you can make a great extra income!

My purpose with this text is to help you get started in the Wonderful World of Mystery Shopping. I am going to walk you through every aspect of the business, and answer questions you didn't even know you had! Nationwide, there are about 500 mystery shopping companies, and I have listed 170 in your resource section to get you started. The ones I have selected for this book have a good reputation within the industry, and that I, or my fellow shoppers, have worked for, so I can personally recommend them. If by chance you exhaust this listing, (in which case, I'd be really impressed!) I have also listed the professional organizations, message boards and many more ways to find assignments and companies.

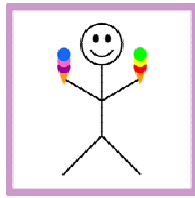
Obviously, I can't guarantee that you'll find employment with the companies in this book, but by the time you finish reading, you'll definitely be well-versed on how to behave as a responsible, reliable shopper.

Good Luck, and Happy Shopping!

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# CHAPTER TWO:

What Is Mystery Shopping?



## WHAT IS MYSTERY SHOPPING?

Mystery Shopping is an aspect of Market Research. I'm sure you've heard of "Focus Groups" where people sit around in a circle to talk about the kind of kitty litter that they buy so the company can make it "New and Improved" well, that's market research. Mystery Shopping is just another way to get a customer's opinion.

Have you ever had a great experience at a store? One where the employee really went the extra mile for you? Or, conversely, have you ever had an experience where an employee just didn't get it? Very rarely do patrons of a store actually contact the management to praise or complain about employees or services. As customers, we are more likely to tell our *friends and families* about an experience at a store, rather than the management. Mystery shopping is a tool that companies use to get inside a customer's head, so that they can improve their business.

As a "shopper" you will be asked to report back on how employees, products, and services are viewed by the average person. The companies can use this information to:

- Evaluate customer service
- Observe loss prevention methods
- Maintain compliance issues, (alcohol and tobacco purchases)
- Observe fair housing practices
- Train employees, on proper and improper methods of interacting with a customer
- Improve the cleanliness, surroundings, products, and services
- Motivate employees with bonuses, rewards, and incentives
- Observe potential employees
- Observe the competition within their industry

Any one of these reasons can help a business to build better customer-service relations, employee satisfaction, and improve productivity within the workplace.

Mystery Shopping was first developed as a way to check on employees and their honesty. Creating "integrity" evaluations, people undercover would pose as customers to make sure that the employee was doing everything as he or she should. Closing a cash drawer, ringing the proper sale amount, giving back correct change, etc. These evaluations helped with a company's loss-prevention program. With the influx of security cameras, point-check stands and other technological advances, mystery shopping evolved into a customer service evaluation program.

The most common misconception about Mystery Shopping is that shoppers are hired to get employees fired. This couldn't be further from the truth. Mystery Shoppers are hired to see what a company is doing right, and how they can improve. As a Mystery Shopper, you will be asked to give an honest and objective evaluation about the service you received. Simple as that!

Although it does sound too good to be true, Mystery Shopping is a legitimate way to earn a great part-time income! There are professional organizations (**see page 100**), certification courses (**see page 59-60**), web forums (**see page 102**), and conventions devoted to the practice of Mystery Shopping.

Believe it! As a mystery shopper you get to choose what kind of shops you want to accept, be it a restaurant, movie theater, retail store, self-storage facility, bank, grocery store, apartment community, or whatever else peaks your interest. You set your schedule depending on your availability, and what area you want to be in. You can shop in the mornings, afternoons, evenings, weekends, on your lunch break or even when you're on vacation! There are shops all over the world just waiting to be accepted! You do not have to have any experience to get started (if you live in Nevada or Texas, check around, because you may need to get a Private Investigator's license) just an ability to take notice of details, be objective in your opinions, and write clear narratives of your experience.