

Wholesale Buying Guide

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Many retail gift shops are faced with the challenge of finding merchandise available at wholesale. Take advantage of permanent wholesale showrooms or marts, located in most major cities in the United States.

Use these tips to make your wholesale purchasing as successful as possible.

Plan Ahead

Be sure to have a budget to work with.

Plan for seasonal buying months in advance of the holiday.

Bring plenty of business cards with you.

Merchandise Mart Basics

All merchandise marts have strict entrance policies. Be sure to check the mart's Web site before you go.

You must be a business owner or buyer for a retail business to make a purchase. Buyers are strongly urged not to bring guests unless the guest is an employee. In addition, most marts do not allow children under 12 years old.

All buyers must clearly demonstrate that they are there strictly to conduct business.

Regular buyers might want to consider a permanent badge to enter the mart. To apply, buyers need to establish their credentials by bringing a photocopy of the state tax permit or confirmation letter from the Department of Revenue, and either a business check or business card.

Payment and Shipping

Individual rooms in the marts may be owned by a small business person who represents many different companies or a large manufacturer or import company. This rep does not handle payments or ship the merchandise. The company itself ships the merchandise and bills you directly. Each company sets their opening and reorder minimum sales amounts.

A credit card in the name of your business is the easiest method of payment.

Products are in constant flux. You may not receive everything you order. Merchandise could be out of stock or discontinued. Be flexible.

Returns and credits are handled by the company you purchased from, not the rep firm. However, the manufacturer's rep can intercede for you if you have a major problem with an item. Their goal is a satisfied customer.

Remember that SCORE has over 11,000 volunteers ready to help [mentor you](#), many of whom have [retail experience](#). Seek help from your [nearest SCORE office](#) or online mentor. SCORE mentoring is always free and confidential.

About the Author

Marjorie Christiansen is co-owner of Minneapolis-based Christiansen & Associates, a wholesale gift rep firm. She is the former owner of Bright Ideas Gifts. A 20-year SCORE volunteer, Marge previously served as secretary on the SCORE Board of Director.