

4 Products on Deep Discount in August

This is the month to shop for new floors, vacuum cleaners, headphones, and printers

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In August you'll begin to see back-to-school sales at many stores. But there are plenty of other great deals, too. Look for deep discounts on flooring, vacuum cleaners, headphones, and printers.

Consumer Reports tracks the prices of the products we test, so we can tell you month by month what to buy on deep discount. Plus we give you shopping tips, buying guides, and ratings to help you find the best deals.

To see more items on sale in August—and the rest of the year—check out our Calendar of Deals.

Floors

Replacing old floors can give a whole new look and feel to a room, but it can be a pricey home-improvement project. Discounts this month can stretch your budget a bit further.

The type of floor you install will depend on how much wear and tear you expect, as well as your budget and style. In general, tile or solid-wood floors are the most durable. But they cost the most, and some wood floors don't withstand

moisture very well. Vinyl, laminate, and engineered wood floors cost less but may not wear as well over time.

Buy wood flooring all at once. By doing this, you're more likely to avoid variations in color or grain from one batch to the next. If you're installing laminate floorboards, however, avoid pattern repetition by using boards from multiple packages.

Consider porcelain tile. This is a natural fit for high-traffic areas of the home. And in our tests, porcelain resisted scratching and denting better than other materials, says Joan Muratore, CR's lead test engineer for flooring. Plus porcelain tile comes in a range of styles to fit any décor.

Do your own prep. Doing prep work on your own, even if you're hiring professionals to handle the installation, can save you hundreds of dollars. Unpack wood or laminate flooring and let it sit for several days in the room where it will be installed so it can adjust to its environment. This is important because in more humid air, the planks can expand; in dryer air, planks can shrink. If they aren't acclimated to the room, after you install them the planks could buckle. If you let them sit for a few days first, though, they will all be conditioned uniformly, and you shouldn't run into any problems.

Vacuum Cleaners

Once you've installed your gleaming new floors, you'll want the right vacuum cleaner to maintain them. It's not uncommon to see sales of 20 percent or more in August, so

keep an eye out for deep discounts.

Vacuums come in a variety of colors and designs, and the best type depends on your needs. If you're just looking to remove surface material from carpets or bare floors, a robotic or stick vacuum may suffice. But if you plan to deep-clean your carpets, upright or canister vacuums may be your best bet.

Look for a vacuum with a motorized brush. It does a better job of cleaning carpets than a vacuum that only has suction. Look for a model that lets you deactivate the brush, which may be a better option when vacuuming bare floors.

Take the vacuum for a test run. Even if you plan to purchase your vacuum cleaner online, it's helpful to try it out first at a store. That way you'll know how heavy it is and whether you can easily maneuver it. While you're there, see if the store will price-match the deal you found online.

Headphones

Treat yourself to an audio upgrade this month when prices on headphones are selling at deep discount. First you'll need to decide whether you should go with large, over-ear headphones, which are best for audiophiles, or in-ear buds.

Get a headphone with a cord. In general, corded models provide a sound quality that's superior to wireless versions. While some wireless headphones do work well, others come with background hissing and/or dynamic range compression that partially deadens the sound.

Make sure the headphones are comfortable. If you wear them for prolonged periods of time (we're looking at you, super-commuters) you don't want them to hurt. The best-sounding headphones are fairly useless if they're uncomfortable.

Printers

Even if you're trying to go paper-free, you never know when you'll need a hard copy. If you're considering buying a printer, you'll find plenty of sales this month. And prices have come down considerably in recent years anyway, with basic inkjet versions available for less than \$100.

Consider an all-in-one printer. While an all-in-one costs more than an inkjet, it could be a better alternative. Such printers let you copy or scan documents in addition to printing.

Find an ink-efficient printer. At an average cost of \$50 per ounce, printer ink is expensive. Read our buying guide to learn more, and see our ratings to find out which printers use ink most efficiently.

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