

Consumer Sources

This guide will point you towards sources that will help you make smart choices regarding the purchase of goods and services. See also other guides in this series: *Finding Good Healthcare*, *Legal Sources*, and *Consumer Complaints*.

1. General Advice

[Consumer World](http://consumerworld.org) (consumerworld.org)

One of the oldest consumer sites on the Web, *Consumer World* is run by consumer advocate Edgar Dworsky

[Federal Trade Commission](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov) (www.consumer.ftc.gov)

This is the federal government's consumer protection agency and has much good advice for consumers on its site.

2. Product Reviews

Consumer Reports

This venerable source can be accessed both in print and online through the library:

- Print:
The library holds the three most recent years' worth of monthly issues (each indexing the previous year's articles) and the annual buying guides (which act as handy one-volume references).
- Online:
 - **Through the *Ebscohost* bundle of databases (requires login):**
From the [library homepage](http://www.prairietrailandlibrary.org) (www.prairietrailandlibrary.org), click on the **Research** command on the menu bar near the top of the page. On the next page, click on the ***Ebsco Database Group*** link. On the following page is a direct link to ***Consumer Reports***. You can also access the magazine by following the ***Ebscohost Research Databases*** link to ***MasterFile Complete*** and search that database by publication.
 - **Through *Zinio* Magazine Collection (requires login):**
From the [library homepage](http://www.prairietrailandlibrary.org) (www.prairietrailandlibrary.org), click on the **E-Materials** command on the menu bar near the top of the page. From the submenu that appears, click on ***Zinio***.

[ConsumerSearch](http://www.consumersearch.com) (www.consumersearch.com)

ConsumerSearch compiles and synthesizes excerpts of reviews from many sources.

[The Wirecutter](http://wirecutter.com) (wirecutter.com)

Founded in 2011, this site features well-documented reviews on many types of items.

MasterFile Database (see above entry for directions on logging in to the *Ebscohost* database)

This general-purpose database indexes articles from many publications, such as *Consumer Reports*, so it is a good source for various types of articles, including product reviews.

[Edmunds](http://edmunds.com) (edmunds.com)

[Kelley Blue Book](http://www.kbb.com) (www.kbb.com)

Two old standbys where you can find professional reviews of new and used cars, along with pricing and links to sellers

[C|net](http://cnet.com) (cnet.com)

[ZDNet](http://www.zdnet.com) (www.zdnet.com)

Two sites that have reported on technology for over twenty years

Shopping/review sites on the Web where users post reviews, such as . . .

[Google Shopping](http://www.google.com/shopping) (www.google.com/shopping)

[Epinions](http://www.epinions.com) (www.epinions.com)

[Amazon](http://www.amazon.com) (www.amazon.com)

The submitted reviews on most shopping/review sites on the Web are usually unvetted, though you will sometimes come across reviews from verified purchasers. So, despite anti-fraud measures taken by sites (usually in the form of filtering software) there is usually a lurking issue of misrepresentation, positive or negative with Web reviews. Still, taken as aggregates they can provide some level of usable information. This also goes for social media sites like [Facebook](http://facebook.com) (facebook.com) as well.

3. Service and Company Reviews

[Better Business Bureau](http://bbb.org) (bbb.org, 312-832-0500, bbbinfo@chicago.bbb.org)

The BBB is a nonprofit organization founded just over a century ago to help consumers find reputable companies to do business with and help those companies find customers. It provides reviews of companies based on the frequency of complaints received and resolved. It also helps mediate those complaints (see separate guide, *Consumer Complaints*).

[Angies List](http://angieslist.com) (angieslist.com)

Started in the mid-90s as a paid call-in service for people looking for reputable home improvement companies, this site now covers a multitude of other services, such as medical, dental, and accounting. Recently, the company has started offering a basic subscription for free, while still offering premium services for a fee.

[Yelp](http://yelp.com) (yelp.com)

This site offers millions of reviews on thousands of businesses. Although the reviews are not verified, the company uses advanced software to filter suspect content. They have also run “sting” operations on businesses suspected of trying to buy and sell fake reviews.

[Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation](http://idfpr.com) (idfpr.com)

Most of the state’s occupational licensing and a good deal of its company regulation takes place here. Use this site to look up individuals and companies for licensing status and past disciplinary actions.