

Guide to Scalping Tickets

College basketball is here! College football is entering bowl season. Want tickets to the game? Can't get them because you are not a season ticket holder or a big wig alumni? Mr. Thrifty has created a guide to scalping tickets which offers some tips and tricks that can help you get tickets to the game at a reasonable price. Read on...

How to Buy Tickets without Getting Scalped

Have you ever wanted to go to the Men's Final Four Basketball tournament? See U2 in concert? Go to the Ohio State-Michigan football game? All of these things are possible if you either have a lot of money, wait in line for a long time or scalp tickets. Mr. Thrifty has been to all of these events and more- most of the time paying less than face value for tickets. This is a guide to help you find scarce tickets to great event.

{mospagebreak title=Know the Scalping Laws}

Mr. Thrifty Principle #1: Research your local scalping laws. When in doubt, ask

Let's start with a disclaimer. Mr. Thrifty would never recommend that you do something illegal. It is suggested that you find out what the scalping laws are in your area. In some places such as Texas scalping is entirely legal except within 100 yards of the venue. In other states like Missouri, buying and selling of tickets is illegal altogether. If you are in an unfamiliar city, don't be afraid to ask. For example, one time at the Alamodome Mr. Thrifty asked a local police officer what the rules were. He politely explained that scalping was legal beyond a particular gate.

{mospagebreak title=Avoid Ticket Agencies}

Mr. Thrifty Principle #2: Avoid ticket agencies or eBay auctions

If you MUST have tickets before you travel to the event or you MUST have to have great seats to the event, you can always buy tickets from eBay auctions or from a ticket agency. For most events, tickets seem to be plentiful online. However, the downside is that these are the highest priced tickets you will find. Recently, tickets for the Men's Final Four were going for \$2,000 a pair for upper level seats. Outrageous!

If you can live with a little uncertainty, buy tickets at the actual event itself and not from a ticket broker. The other warning is if you buy from an auction, be careful that the tickets are authentic. There have been many cases of fraud where the buyer ended up with worthless tickets. Check out the sellers feedback rating carefully before buying.

{mospagebreak title=Use Craigslist}

Mr. Thrifty Principle #3: Put a "tickets wanted" ad up on Craigslist or in a local newspaper

If you still want to have a ticket prior to the event, the best way to find cheap tickets is to run a "tickets wanted" ad on either <http://www.craigslist.com/> or in your local newspaper. Be sure to use language like "Fan, not a professional scalper, looking for tickets for the Cardinal-Cubs series. I want to surprise my wife on her birthday (if that is true)." Fans want to sell to other fans and not to a scalper. Even better if you have a personal story involved with the tickets. I recently got second row Cirque De Soleil tickets for less than face value from an ad I ran. I saved money and my wife was very impressed on her birthday (Mr. Thrifty earned a bunch of points that night).

{mospagebreak title=Bring Cash and a Map}

Mr. Thrifty Principle #4: Bring cash and your own seating map of the venue

So, it is game day and you still don't have tickets. Don't fret, it is not too late. Before you head to the stadium, you need to bring a couple of things. First, make sure you have cash- people selling tickets are not going to take your Visa Check Card. Second, bring a map of the stadium. This is essential. If you don't have a map, you don't know if the tickets you are buying are great seats or terrible seats. You can usually find venue seating maps either in your local phone book or by running a search on Google.

{mospagebreak title=Root for the Home Team}

Mr. Thrifty Principle #5: Wear colors or logos of the home team

As we discussed earlier, fans want to sell tickets to other fans. Therefore, wear team colors or logos to the game. You will find it much easier to find folks that are willing to sell tickets to you for a good price if they think you are going to be a vocal supporter for their team. If you are not rooting for the home team, wear neutral colors and then change in to the opposing team colors after you have bought tickets. If people selling tickets know that a) you are from out of town, and b) you are not cheering for their team, they will ask you for top dollar for their tickets.

{mospagebreak title=Hang Out in the Parking Lot}

Mr. Thrifty Principle #6: Hang out near the parking lots not near the venue entrance

Even though it sounds counter intuitive, the worst place to buy tickets is near the stadium. This is because of two reasons: 1) That is where all of the professional scalpers hang out, and 2) Close to the stadium everyone there knows the "market clearing price" for the tickets. If it not a few minutes before the start of the event, you are much better to hang out near the parking lot as opposed to the venue entrance. The people you want to buy from are not professional scalpers but rather fans with extra tickets who are just arriving at the game.

At the Tennessee-Florida football game Mr. Thrifty and his friends were able to buy tickets from the president of the RV club (his name, no joke, was Glen Dickman). Great seats for one of the best college football rivalries in the U.S.!

{mospagebreak title=Wait Until Tip Off}

Mr. Thrifty Principle #7: Wait until right before or right after the event starts

As time gets closer and closer to "kick-off" and you don't have tickets, move closer to the actual venue. By this time there will not be a lot of people parking their cars and those that do are in a rush to get into the game. At this point you might be able to find a scalper near that stadium entrance who is desperate to unload their tickets. One year Mr. Thrifty went to the Cotton Bowl in Dallas to see Ricky Williams play his final college football game. The asking price for the tickets outside the stadium was \$200 a ticket. However there seemed to be a lot of tickets available. Mr. Thrifty decided to wait and see what would happen. As it got closer and closer to kick-off the price of the tickets

started to plummet until someone just gave Mr. Thrifty tickets so they could get inside and watch the kickoff.

{mospagebreak title=Buy from the Losers}

Mr. Thrifty Principle #8: Buy tickets from the losing team

Events like the Final Four basketball tournament present great ticket buying opportunity- buy tickets from the losing team after the first game. Strangely enough it is much more difficult to get tickets to the semi-final game of the "Big Dance" than to the actual national championship game. It makes sense when you consider that there are four fan bases vying for tickets for the semi's and only two fan bases vying for the finals. Watch the first game at a sports bar near the stadium and the plant yourself by the exits with 10 minutes to go in the game. You can buy a ticket from a disgruntled fan who is upset for driving 22 hours from North Carolina to see the game. Usually you can get tickets for much less than face.

Note: if you use this strategy you will still need to buy another ticket in order to get into the second game of the semi-finals. The sporting venue will not let you stub into the second game but rather you need an actual ticket. Here is what to do: buy a ticket for a decent seat from a losing fan (preferably on the lower level) then find a scalper who is willing to unload a ticket to a terrible seat. Use the terrible ticket to get into the venue and then take your seat on the lower level.

Mr. Thrifty has used this strategy very successfully at several Final Fours.

{mospagebreak title=Check the Ticket Carefully}

Mr. Thrifty Principle #9: Check the ticket carefully

Just one last principle… be sure you check the ticket carefully. It is not unknown for scammers to print a fake ticket and pass it off to an unsuspecting buyer. Usually before buying a ticket, Mr. Thrifty will look at several tickets from sellers to get the feel of the paper stock, style of the ticket, and note any holograms or other anti-counterfeit technologies used on the tickets.

The other thing before buying a ticket is to check the ticket date and seating assignment. Mr. Thrifty found one person trying to sell a ticket for a game that happened the week before. Another trick that some scalpers try to use it to have two single seats and sell them as a pair. If you are buying several seats together, make sure you check the section, row and seat numbers to ensure that they are together. You don't want to end up on the other side of the stadium from your friends.

Good deals can be found on tickets if you are patient, can tolerate a little bit of uncertainty and are careful. Overall it can be well worth it to get great seats at a great price to a great game.

The best Mr. Thrifty ticket story took place in Colorado. Driving back from a wonderful ski trip, our car was blasting the radio as we were heading down the highway. About 30 miles outside of Denver we figured out that the Broncos were going to play the Pittsburgh Steelers in a Division Championship Playoff game. We simply pulled off of the highway and into the parking lot of Mile High Stadium two hours before the game. With out tickets or a lot of money we split up to try to find tickets. Mr. Thrifty ended up with 10th row, 50-yard line tickets to an unbelievable football game. One of the best memories from the whole trip!