

# Back-To-School Spending Expected to Rise

Before kids head back to school, consumers are heading to stores, and retailers are hoping that increased spending this year signals a recovering economy.

The [National Retail Federation](#) says spending for the back-to-school season will pump \$14.1 billion into the economy. A new survey by the retailers' association found that families with school-aged children will spend an average of \$450.76 on back-to-school items, up from \$441.60 in 2002.

"With consumers heading to the stores for everything from scissors to sneakers, retailers are hopeful that the back-to-school season will signal the beginning of an economic recovery," NRF President and CEO Tracy Mullin said in a news release.

The back-to-school shopping period runs from July through September. It is the second-largest selling season, behind Christmas.

An earlier survey by [America's Research Group](#) indicated that consumers plan on spending 10 percent more on back-to-school items this fall than they did last year.

Consumers in the ARG survey said they planned to spend an average of \$338.50 on back-to-school expenses in 2003, compared to \$302.31 in 2002.

Of families' back-to-school budget, kids will spend about 57 percent.

"The back-to-school season is a family affair," said Phil Rist, vice president of strategy for BIGresearch, which conducted the NRF study. "Not only do children have a huge influence over what their parents buy, they are also more than willing to set aside their own money for what they really want to have when they return to the classroom."

And what are the hot buys for kids this year?

ARG asked kids what logos and characters they liked most to decorate their back-to-school supplies.

The top five fictional characters kids chose were Sponge Bob Square Pants (7.5 percent), Pokemon (4.8 percent), Spiderman (4.6 percent), Dora the Explorer (3.9 percent) and Shoes (3.4 percent).

The top five non-fictional characters kids chose were WWF Wrestlers (4.6 percent), Britney Spears (2.9 percent), Christina Aguilera (1.9 percent), Michael Jordan (1.7 percent) and Dale Earnhardt (1.5 percent).

Other kids chose sports team logos to don their back-to-school gear. NASCAR ranked No. 1 with 4.6 percent of kids choosing gear with the racing logo. Following NASCAR were college teams (4.4 percent), the Atlanta Braves (2.4 percent), the New York Yankees (2.2 percent) and the Dallas Cowboys (1.7 percent).

ARG said that while consumers will be spending more this year, they would be visiting fewer stores.

More than half of consumers will only shop at two stores. And in the top three spots are Wal-Mart, Sears and JCPenney.

New deals putting Levi Strauss & Co. clothing in Wal-Mart and an exclusive line of Lee blue jeans in Target could spell trouble for K-Mart, as it tries to attract shoppers in its first back-to-school shopping season since emerging from bankruptcy.

For K-Mart, which came out of Chapter 11 in May after closing 600 stores, "To not do well, would not bode well," Mike Bernacchi, a marketing professor at the University of Detroit-Mercy, told the [\*Detroit Free Press\*](#).

Clothing items are the big-ticket items for back-to school. Over 29 percent of people said in the ARG survey they will spend between \$300 and \$400 on back-to-school clothing.

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