# Ashlee Piper's no new things challenge transforms consumer habits and wellbeing



In 2013, Ashlee Piper embarked on a personal experiment that challenged conventional consumer habits by committing to a month-long pledge of buying no new items. Her initiative, later dubbed the “No New Things” challenge, aimed to address both financial strain and environmental sustainability, while also seeking to curb her compulsive shopping habits.

Piper, who was juggling a demanding career and feeling overwhelmed by accumulated possessions—ranging from ill-fitting clothes to unread books and unnecessary home décor—sought to simplify her life. “I was suffocating under the weight of my stuff, and I had a suspicion that shopping was quietly stealing my time,” she explained in an interview. Additionally, Piper faced significant debt, a result of using shopping as a coping mechanism through financial highs and lows. Recognising the urgent need to change, she resolved to stop buying new goods for one month.

The challenge’s rules allowed for exceptions in essential purchases such as groceries, underwear, toothbrushes, haircuts, and experiences like dining out or attending concerts. For all other needs, Piper devised the S.U.P.E.R. System to source items without buying new. This system encouraged: - Shopping secondhand through thrift stores, consignment shops, and online resale platforms. - Using, upcycling, or creatively reimagining belongings already owned. - Paying nothing by accessing items via store credits, free networks, or finding goods discarded but still usable. - Emphasising experiences, donations, or monetary gifts rather than material presents. - Renting, borrowing, or sharing goods within her community.

What started as a month-long experiment extended into nearly two years, profoundly altering Piper’s relationship with consumerism. She documented her journey in her book, *No New Things: A Radically Simple 30-Day Guide to Saving Money, the Planet, and Your Sanity*, and continues to advocate for sustainable living through her social media platforms.

During the 683 days of abstaining from buying new things, Piper noted several significant benefits. Financially, she saved over $36,000 and paid off $22,000 in debt. She emphasised that while major expenses like housing and healthcare remain critical, reducing discretionary shopping expenses yielded substantial savings. She also reported reclaiming considerable time previously devoted to shopping-related activities such as browsing, cleaning, and storing possessions. This reclaimed time allowed her to engage in volunteering, strengthen personal relationships, pursue hobbies, advance her career, and complete long-postponed projects.

Piper highlighted a renewed sense of gratitude and appreciation for existing belongings. Instead of acquiring new items, she focused on repairing and reimagining what she already had. “Taking inventory of your things and making them useful and beautiful again really ratchets up the gratitude for all of the abundance you probably currently enjoy, but are distracted from clearly seeing,” she said.

Her home environment benefited from reduced clutter, which translated into less stress and decision fatigue. Citing scientific research, Piper noted that cluttered spaces notably increase stress, particularly among women. By decluttering and halting the influx of new possessions, she found her living space transformed into a supportive setting for creativity and relaxation.

Interestingly, Piper observed an enhanced sense of creativity and personal style because of the constraints imposed by the challenge. By relying on what she already owned, she became more resourceful and confident in meeting her needs without immediate recourse to purchasing. She candidly shared how tracking her shopping impulses revealed common triggers, including cold weather, procrastination, tiredness, thirst, and discomfort from tight clothing. Addressing these underlying causes, rather than surrendering to impulse buying, helped her rewire her consumption habits.

The challenge also fostered stronger social connections. Piper rediscovered the value of sharing resources and support within her community—borrowing tools, exchanging advice, and giving and receiving used items. In an era described by experts as facing a loneliness epidemic, these reciprocal interactions brought her a sense of fulfilment.

Lastly, Piper stressed the environmental benefits of consuming less and making greater use of existing products rather than constantly buying new. She acknowledged that production and disposal of new goods contribute significantly to global emissions, and her small personal change offered a measure of positive impact within her corner of the world.

Since first undertaking the challenge, Piper’s experience has inspired thousands to adopt similar practices. Her message affirms the power of individual habits to create meaningful change while fostering greater contentment and wellbeing.

*No New Things: A Radically Simple 30-Day Guide to Saving Money, the Planet, and Your Sanity* is available for purchase.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://shiragill.com/why-you-should-try-a-no-new-things-challenge/> - Corroborates Piper's emphasis on sustainability, creative resourcefulness (secondhand shopping, upcycling), and the psychological benefits of her challenge.
2. <https://www.entrepreneur.com/living/her-no-new-things-challenge-paid-off-22k-debt-saved-36k/489793> - Supports Piper's financial savings ($36,000 saved, $22,000 debt paid), duration (2013 start, extended to nearly two years), and decluttering benefits.
3. <https://www.instagram.com/ashleepiper/> - Validates Piper's current advocacy for sustainable living and her book promotion.
4. <https://shiragill.substack.com/p/the-no-new-things-challenge> - Confirms the challenge's rules (abstaining from new purchases while allowing essentials/experiences) and community-sharing emphasis.
5. <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/214161655-no-new-things> - Details Piper's book, its customized 30-day framework, and its focus on reducing consumerism's mental/environmental impact.
6. <https://www.entrepreneur.com/living/her-no-new-things-challenge-paid-off-22k-debt-saved-36k/489793> - Validates Piper's career transition (political strategist to sustainability expert) and the challenge's impact on debt reduction.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/yourmoney/article-14644047/I-didnt-buy-new-TWO-YEARS-heres-saved-surprising-effect.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data