

## Five to never compromise

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Self-deprivation -- forgoing your morning latte, buying dented canned goods, taking the bus to work -- can be morally invigorating. That said, there are some things in life that are simply non-negotiable. Here are five things you must never skimp on: Tires They may not be a glamorous purchase, but good tires are worth the average price tag of around \$500 to \$800 a pair. It's important to get the right fit for your vehicle, driving style and road conditions.

Once you've made your selection, ascertain the tires' tread wear grading for an idea of how long they can be expected to last. A rank of 500 to 700 is very good -- the higher the number, the more mileage you'll get. Traction grades indicate how well they'll stop on a wet surface, with an "AA" grade, meaning they'll stop in the shortest distance. Mattresses Given that you sleep about 2,920 hours a year, you want to make sure you get the best mattress.

Although the notion of comfort is a very individual one -- especially when it comes to firmness -- the models that consistently rank among the best are the Hypnos and the V1-Spring from Britain, and the Hastens and Duxiana from Sweden.

Handcrafted mattresses using silk, lambs wool, cashmere, Talalay latex or handtied coils start at \$10,000 and run to about \$22,000. If that price range leaves you sleepless, there are plenty of other choices. Pay attention to the padding; that's what will wear out first. Thicker padding is the rage these days and it does contribute to comfort. But it also costs a lot more. And you'll need sheets with extra-deep pockets (from Frette or Pratesi, of course) for a proper fit. Coffee Taste is individual when it comes to coffee blends and regions of origin, but there is no compromise when it comes to fresh roasted beans. The best coffee is brewed from beans within two days of roasting.

There are various high-end coffee beans from Jamaica, Hawaii or Latin America, but the most exotic is Indonesian Kopi Luwak (\$650 per pound). It's made from beans that have been consumed and then defecated whole by the Asian palm civet. Otherwise, stick to Starbucks' beans for about \$15 a pound. Shoes & purses You need one really good bag and one excellent pair of black pumps if you expect to get anywhere in this life.

When it comes to handbags there are two routes: classic, such as Hermes, Burberry or Louis Vuitton; or fashion, such as Fendi, Gucci, Miu Miu. You are looking at investing a minimum of about \$1,500, but a good purse is something that you use every day and gives you pleasure every time you do.

As for shoes, anything from Jimmy Choo will work, from a one-inch kitten heel (\$500) to a deadly Pierre Hardy python peep-toe (\$1,000). Hair Colour Honestly, do you really believe Heather Locklear or Sarah Jessica Parker stand in their bathrooms applying gunk from a squeeze tube to touch up their roots? Of course you don't. Find a professional to give you the best colour or blend of colours for your skin tone. You'll be spending about \$150 every six weeks, but that's a bargain to look so fabulous!