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## A newbie's guide to IKEA

Some tips to help newbies and diehard fans navigate the mammoth Swedish home furnishings store

Story by Rachel Sutherland

Posted: Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2009

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**FURNITURE, HOME DECOR:** Curtis Parker works a furniture display at the IKEA in University City, the first of its kind in the Carolinas.

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*Family-friendly entertainment and freebies kick off at 6a.m. Wednesday. Doors open at 9 a.m.*

Regular store hours: 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday; 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Sunday.  
Restaurant opens and closes 30 minutes before store opening and closing.

Details: [www.ikea.com](http://www.ikea.com)

IKEA SLIDESHOW: [www.charlotte](http://www.charlotteobserver.com/style)

[observer.com/style](http://observer.com/style)

With the opening of IKEA in University City on Wednesday, the buzz that's been building since 2007 will reach a crescendo. The 356,000-square-foot store is a boost for Charlotte's collective retail ego, and a coup for fans of moderately priced home décor.

"IKEA is unlike anything else in this market and they are unlike any other retailer of their stature," Jennifer Stanton, president of Advisory Services, a Matthews-based national real estate strategy firm, said recently in an e-mail.

The Swedish furniture giant, which built its brand on chic, cheap furniture you assemble at home, has been known to attract diehards days in advance of a store opening. Fans in Charlotte will be allowed to start lining up at 9 a.m. Monday at the store off I-85 at Exit 43.

Inside the Charlotte store, shoppers will find all things home-related (except bathtubs and toilets), 49 room settings including 17 sample kitchens, a children's play area and a 350-seat restaurant.

Here are things to know before you go.

Measure everything. Note the measurements of everything in your home, including windows and the wall space between them. "You want to know right then if that really fabulous sideboard you didn't expect to find will fit," says Christina Lewis, owner of the Redesign Company, an interior design firm in Davidson. Bring your tape measure with you, or use a free IKEA paper version.

Give yourself plenty of time. For your first trip, plan on at least half a day. And follow the floor plan. Pay attention to the map of the two-story store – it's easy to get disoriented.

Have an open mind. Do your homework, check availability online before you hit the store. And always have a plan B. "One of my favorite moments was when we were five hours in (on a previous IKEA shopping trip), and they didn't have the sofa we had built a room around," Lewis says. "I sat down and cried. This can be so hard, but so worth it too."

Don't go alone. Having a shopping partner is important for more than second opinions – a partner can help you load the flat-packed furniture boxes into your automobile. Mobile phones

are a must, too, Lewis says. One person can head down to the warehouse and check availability while the other shops.

Dress appropriately. You will walk – a lot. Wear comfortable, supportive shoes and leave your jacket in the car.

Eat. The menu at the IKEA restaurant is stocked with standard lunch fare and the notable Swedish meatballs. Breakfasts start at 99 cents, and children's meals are available.

The prices are low for a reason. Cost-trimming measures abound, from the lack of shopping bags (bring your own) to attention to space-saving packaging and do-it-yourself furniture assembly.



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**cowley10** wrote on 02/12/2009 11:01:19 AM:

When translated, IKEA in Swedish means.....pressboard.

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**bgwfreak** wrote on 02/12/2009 09:00:31 AM:

I'm glad to have IKEA here for several reasons, tops of the list is the number of jobs provided by this huge place.

I can't wait to check out my first IKEA.

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**jennifer7** wrote on 02/12/2009 08:38:52 AM:

any problems with anything. Their prices vary but for anyone that can't afford to buy the super expensive stuff it's great! And they definitely don't just carry furniture...their decor is awesome too...and everything is modern.

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**jmb** wrote on 02/12/2009 08:18:13 AM:

I love IKEA and have found everything that I purchased there to be great quality. I've purchased coffee tables, a small dinette set, Billy bookcases, a bed (great quality & easy to put together), and 2 dressers etc from them and have not had any problems with it. Most of their stuff comes in flat boxes so it's easy to get home - you don't have to rent a truck or pay for delivery. They have fun, colorful stuff for the kitchen that doesn't cost a lot too. They also showed brilliant planning locating the store in the University area. They have TONS of ideas for small spaces (like dorm rooms), and the price is right. I hope they do well here. Oh, and the ice cream is great and also priced right. Try some of their cookies too. Welcome to Charlotte, IKEA!!!

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**Jeto** wrote on 02/12/2009 06:00:30 AM:

I never bought anything from IKEA that has not lasted for years. I have a lamp that I bought before I moved to Charlotte 16 years ago. And a year ago, I bought two tables from the a Philly area store. For people who can't see spending 2,000 for a sofa, IKEA is the place to go.

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**flsblog** wrote on 02/12/2009 05:00:22 AM:

The prices are low for a reason. The furniture is made of sawdust and glue. Its junk that will fill up our landfills in 4 or 5 years. The level of formaldehyde is enough to kill a rat. Buy wooden furniture and have it for a lifetime. ts nearly impossible to refinish. Don't get sucked up under this marketing bus.

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