

## JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE . . .

Anne Austin

[Assignment: Write a classification essay in which you categorize a group of persons, places, or objects so that the introductory paragraph clearly states the basis of the categories and your reasons for classifying.]

(1) For anyone who has ever been shopping in a mall and been annoyed by other shoppers walking too slowly, knocking people down, or holding up the lines, I have some advice that could help prevent future irritations of this kind. From my experience as a shopper and as a mall employee, I have encountered many different types of shoppers, but three categories in particular seem to stand out as the most exasperating. These are the "Cruisers," the "Speed Shoppers," and the "Browsers." It is important to know what they look like, how they act, and when they are most likely to be in the mall so that you can easily spot Cruisers, Speed Shoppers, and Browsers and get out of their way as quickly as possible.

(2) The Cruisers. These people are mostly teenagers who view the mall as a social place, not a shopping place. Dressed up in the latest fashions, the Cruisers get together in groups of four or more and stroll around the mall, usually on a Friday or a Saturday evening. They walk slowly, not caring if their strolling bothers anyone else. Cruisers also tend to congregate in large crowds when they find other Cruiser friends or acquaintances. The goal of Cruisers is not to shop in the shopping mall; instead, they view the mall as a paradise--the ultimate socializing scene--a place to see and be seen and maybe meet Mr. or Ms. Wonderful, at least for that week.

(3) Another tell-tale sign of the Cruisers is their buying habits. They do not have the time to shop, for if they were to get sidetracked, they might miss some interesting people or some startling scandal about to happen. The only purchases the Cruisers might make are a soft drink to quench their thirst and a pack of gum, because these items can be carried with them as they stroll. Thus, if you do not want to spend the whole evening in the mall, you must avoid the strolling Cruisers at all costs.

(4) The Speed Shoppers. These are mostly middle-aged people who often shop alone because they feel that other people would only slow them down. Viewing the shopping mall as a dreadful burden whose sole purpose is to provide essentials, the Speed Shoppers try to avoid this place except when it is absolutely required. Because they do not plan on staying and therefore do not need to be presentable, these people are usually sloppily attired, displaying curlers or beards. They buy the items on their list and get out, never lingering or window-shopping. Speed Shoppers do not have time for

that kind of foolishness. In order to avoid the usual weekend lines, Speed Shoppers shop on weekday evenings.

(5) There are two indicators of Speed Shoppers you should look out for. The first is their lists, revered almost like a holy document. These lists are most likely crumpled from the perspiration caused by gripping them so hard. The second is the number of purchases the Speed Shoppers make. The items are usually few, nothing extreme, extravagant, or heavy because they do not want to be weighed down as they tear through the stores. It is vital to your physical health that you learn to spot these people, or someday, without warning, you may be knocked down by a Speed Shopper dashing through the mall.

(6) The Browsers. These people make up the largest portion of shoppers. Most people at one time or another have been Browsers. Usually though, females, in groups of two to four, dominate this category. They view the shopping mall as a place to relax and wander through. The Browsers are nicely but casually dressed so they can be comfortable, yet fashionable. You can usually spot the Browsers on Saturday or Sunday afternoons because then they can devote all their time to shopping. They just want to look around and spend quality time with the family and friends who accompany them. This type of relaxed shopping gives the Browsers a chance to catch up on gossip or the latest information.

(7) The marks of the Browsers are their peculiar spending habits and their indecisiveness. These are the people who come without any idea of what they want, if anything, and leave with the most purchases. On the other hand, they may try on or look at almost everything and not buy a single item. Indecisiveness is the Browsers' worst vice. They exasperate both store employees and other customers trying to make their way through the line. If you do not mind waiting, there is nothing to worry about when you encounter Browsers. Otherwise, be on the look-out or they will make your "quick trip" to the mall a virtual nightmare.

(8) Obviously, not all shoppers fit neatly into one of these three categories, but these divisions do represent a fair number of people wandering through the malls today. I hope my information and advice will help prevent future confrontations with these annoying shoppers. However, I want you to remember that not only must you worry about encountering one of those problem shoppers but you must also watch yourself, or someday you may find yourself slipping into one of the three categories. If you catch yourself strolling aimlessly through the mall on weekend evenings, knocking people over in your rush to get out of the mall, or buying five hundred dollars worth of clothes without understanding why, do not delay: seek professional help immediately!