

Ways To Save

You finally decided you want to compete in a bodybuilding competition. Competing can be an expensive hobby but there are ways to save money and we've broken it down for you here:

Posing Suits—Female: \$100-\$1000+

THE FACTS: Posing Suits can make a big difference in showing off your hard work on stage. Having a suit that fits your body, is well-made, and is in a color that really pops on your skin tone is ideal. The price range for a suit can vary significantly depending on the category, the level of competition (local, regional, national, pro), and whether you are a first-time competitor versus a seasoned competitor. The posing suit is an investment. You will want to look your best and you will want the judges to remember you. Having a suit that is custom made for your body contributes to your overall presentation. Remember, if you feel good about how you look, you will reflect that confidence on the stage. Look for a well-constructed suit that will hold up for the season. One factor that increases the costs of the suits is the amount of 'bling.' Ensure that your posing suit is in line with the level of competition you are attending.

WAYS TO SAVE: You may consider borrowing a suit, renting a suit or purchasing a used suit. The most important factor is the fit, so just make sure the suit fits well.



Spray Tan: \$100-\$150

THE FACTS: Each show has a spray tanning company that is affiliated or a sponsor of that show. Their prime responsibility is to spray tan and glaze competitors before they are on stage. The tan is one place you don't want to cut corners. If you are not tanned dark enough, you look washed out on stage with the bright lights. If you don't prepare the skin correctly before the tan, you could appear blotchy or have a reaction. Some people need a good base before they get a spray tan. Both men and women need to begin shaving early in order to avoid razor burns. Experience has shown that by following the instructions of the spray tan company at least 4 weeks out from your show can make your experience stress free.

WAYS TO SAVE: Follow all the instructions from the tanning professionals to prepare your skin. Plan ahead and set aside money for the tan in advance; this is not an area you want to skimp on.

Shoes: \$45-\$100

THE FACTS: The least expensive place to purchase competition shoes is online. Women's shoes are suggested to have a 5" heel height for Bikini and Figure categories. There are numerous styles of shoes to choose from, however, the shoes with the straps around the ankle provide more stability. A high platform is easier to walk in but is not preferred as much as a lower front of shoe. The most important thing is to go ahead and purchase your shoes! Practice walking in your shoes and start to break them in as soon as possible so that you look natural, like you are having fun when you are on stage!

WAYS TO SAVE: Purchase your shoes online.

Jewelry, Nails & Accessories: \$30-\$200

THE FACTS: For the perfect look, it's the finishing touches that make you stand out from the rest on stage. Earrings, bracelets, rings and polished nails are those little things that make your look complete. Many times, suit makers also sell jewelry that complement their suits. There are also other companies that specialize in competition prep jewelry. Most frequently, competitors will have a French manicure and pedicure. Other accessories can include bra inserts, and bikini tape, glue or skin fasteners to hold the suit in place.

WAYS TO SAVE: Discount stores carry competition-similar costume jewelry as well as manicure supplies, such as press on nails. Bra inserts can be found at fabric stores and Elmer's Craft Bond Glue can be used to keep some suits in place.

Posing Suits—Male: \$40-\$125

THE FACTS: Men don't have to worry about near as many options as the females but a good fitting suit is still important. Bodybuilders have several cuts and several colors to choose from for pre-made suits. They are easy to order online and can be delivered relatively quickly. Custom suits are available and like female posing suits, higher levels of competition require higher demands in posing suits, such as a better fit with more choices in fabric and color. Classic Physique suits are required to be black in color. Pre-made suits can be purchased directly from the NPC organization or there are several suit makers that will custom fit the suits for you. Men's Physique board shorts can be purchased at local stores or online. Pay particular attention to the fit. Board shorts should be fitted but not too tight, too baggy or too long and any patterns should be flattering to your body.

WAYS TO SAVE: In shopping for board shorts, if you know what brand fits your body the best, look for those brands on sale. Some of the discount stores that carry name brands will frequently have board shorts at super low prices. You may also consider borrowing suits, renting suits from other competitors or purchasing used suits.

Hair & Make Up: \$70-\$500

THE FACTS: For the overall presentation, hair and make up play an important role. Matching your spray tan, and using a style of make up and lashes that is "over the top" compared to your daily make up can be overwhelming for some. In order to look your best, have your hair and make up done professionally. The cost of purchasing all the necessary make up that you would need can far exceed paying for a professional application. (Plus, make up has an expiration date). Hair needs are very different for each individual. Having someone blow it out or curl it is one thing, but color, highlights, and extensions take it to another level. Typically hair and make up will be offered at a show. Color or extensions may require you to seek out a professional that can do those things for you a week or two in advance of your show date.

WAYS TO SAVE: Learn how to do the make up and hair yourself for the day of your show. Take the time to practice applying your make up and learn which products work for you to avoid any potential allergic reactions. Look to buy your products on sale when possible. If you hire someone to do hair or make up, you may consider asking your hairdresser or make up artist for a discount or to sponsor you in return for you posting on social media or allowing use of your pictures for advertising.

Hotels: \$100-\$300/night (typically 2 days)

THE FACTS: The promoter of the show attains a host hotel for a competition and often arranges for discounts for the athletes. If you are competing at a local show, a hotel may not be necessary but if you have to travel to the show, a hotel will be required. The Day of Show is a long day; having a place to rest in between pre-judging and the finals is helpful in making the day a great experience. If you do choose to stay in a hotel, make sure you bring your own dark sheets for the bed linens and plastic wrap for the toilet seat in order to avoid staining the hotel's property with your tan and having to pay for any damages.

WAYS TO SAVE: Share a hotel with another competitor to split the cost.

Travel & Transportation: (Cost Vary)

THE FACTS: Driving, flying, car rental and parking costs can be quite expensive. The good news is that you should know well in advance which shows you are planning to attend. Strategically planning your competitions can insure that the shows you and your coach choose will best suit your needs.

WAYS TO SAVE: Save for your trip in advance: look for sales, use credit card or frequent flyer points, determine if it's more cost effective to drive instead of fly and see if car-pooling is an option.

Posing Coach \$30-\$125 per session

THE FACTS: For most people, posing is harder than it looks. It takes practice and someone who can teach you how to present your assets and hide your flaws when you are on stage.

WAYS TO SAVE: Do one on one posing sessions to learn how to pose and what you need to do. Then practice everyday and do group posing practice as often as possible.

Coaching and Training: \$50- \$100 per session/\$50-\$300 per month

THE FACTS: Every competitor can benefit by having someone to be accountable to, someone that has an objective set of eyes. A coach can be those eyes and can offer as much or as little help as you need including training, nutrition, cardio plans and posing. A trainer can help you push beyond your comfort zone and if you are following the plan they provide, you should be able to see changes quicker than if you are on your own. If you are newer to the sport, you need to have a personal trainer to help you, even if it's just once a week so you can learn what you need to do.

WAYS TO SAVE: With a desire to compete, you may not need a trainer but instead may benefit from an online prep program, occasional consultations or occasional training sessions to help increase your intensity.

Food & Supplements: (Cost Vary)

THE FACTS: While the average person may not realize it, to be lean, competitors eat between 6-10 times a day and that can add up at the cash register. You don't have to eat the most expensive cuts of meats and vegetables but you can make smart choices. The only way you can make the gains to your body that you need to make is by eating the right foods in the right portions. Supplements can be helpful in preparing for your show; from protein powder to pre-workout to fat burners and more, there are a wide range of supplements to choose from. Keep in mind that supplements are supplemental and should not be used in place of meals. Supplements can be convenient, especially when you are traveling or in long meetings at work. Supplements are also useful to help absorb nutrients and aid with recovery.

WAYS TO SAVE: Planning and preparing ahead, searching for coupons, buying foods on sale, and freezing foods can help to keep costs down. Can you compete without supplements? Yes, but in lieu of that, many supplement companies give discounts to the clients of trainers or fitness facilities for referring them, some companies will sponsor athletes. By taking advantage of sales and frequent buyer programs, you can also save.

Music & Choreography: \$100-\$500

THE FACTS: Most categories that require posing routines allow 45-60 seconds for a routine. You need to choose your music and have it edited prior to starting to choreograph the routine. Some choreographers will do it all for you. The goal is to show you off in the best way possible so your routine should be comprised of moves you are comfortable doing and can have fun with on stage. This is your moment to shine!

WAYS TO SAVE: With today's technology, editing music is much easier to do on your own. If you feel comfortable, you may be able to choreograph your own routine and have a coach review it.

Entry & Organization Fees: \$225-\$425

THE FACTS: The NPC organization is a membership that enables you to compete in shows governed by the NPC organization which allows you the opportunity to turn IFBB Pro. This is the only path to the Olympia stage. It is a set calendar year fee and can be purchased online at NPCNEWSONLINE.com. Entry fees to the shows are set by the show and are typically paid per category that you are competing in. You are usually allowed to compete in more than one category with all of the rules outlined in the registration process for each individual show.

WAYS TO SAVE: Some shows include entry into other shows as a part of the prize package for the overall winners of their show.

Photography: \$100-\$600

THE FACTS: Often times the show will offer photography and videography services. You've done the hard work and you look the best you've ever looked – of course you want photos! You can choose to do them at the show or you may choose to do a photo shoot at your gym, outdoors or at a studio. In any event, using a professional will assist you in getting photos that you may never be able to get on your own. Do your research so the photographer you choose shoots photos in the style you want. Have an idea of at least some of the types of shots you want in your portfolio and make sure you have a clear understanding of what you are paying for – the shoot, number of photos you will get, whether photos are edited, and who owns the rights to use the photos.

WAYS TO SAVE: Again, with today's technology, you may be adept as a do it yourself photographer. If professional photography is still your desire, you could inquire about splitting the cost of a photo shoot with other competitors or see if any of the students at a photography school may be available at a less expensive rate.

BOTTOM LINE: Where there is a will, there is a way and if you are smart and plan ahead you can compete and have fun knowing that you're staying within budget. See you at the show!