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THE GEAR HUNTER

Accessorize your dorm Tech comforts for your first room away from home

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For high-school graduates heading to college, the world is full of possibilities.

No curfews. No parents. And, most of the time, no attendance rules.

Those are just a few of the perks (and pitfalls) the class of 2010 will encounter when it arrives on campus. But before the students get there, a major concern is the look of their future housing, aka dormitories.

"It's definitely going to be the place they're going to hang out the most," said Jeanette Zalba, associate director for university residence halls at the University at Buffalo. "Even though it's a small space, it's going to be theirs."

With the wealth of product information available on the Internet - a Google search of "back to school" yields more than 80 million results in .43 seconds - the best advice is to shop around. Here's a look at some of the more interesting dorm-room accessories out there:

iHome Portable Alarm Clock

Description: With all the perks of a regular stereo system, this MP3 accessory recharges your iPod while you rest, then plays music to awaken you in the morning.

Price: \$99.99

Web: ihomeaudio.com

The 'A' grade: You pick the hits to wake you up.

Sound Therapy

Eye Mask

Description: The plush mask from Brookstone blocks pesky daylight while five tranquil sounds lull the wearer back to sleep. An audio input jack provides the option of listening to your own music. The device features a 30-minute automatic shutoff and runs on batteries or AC.

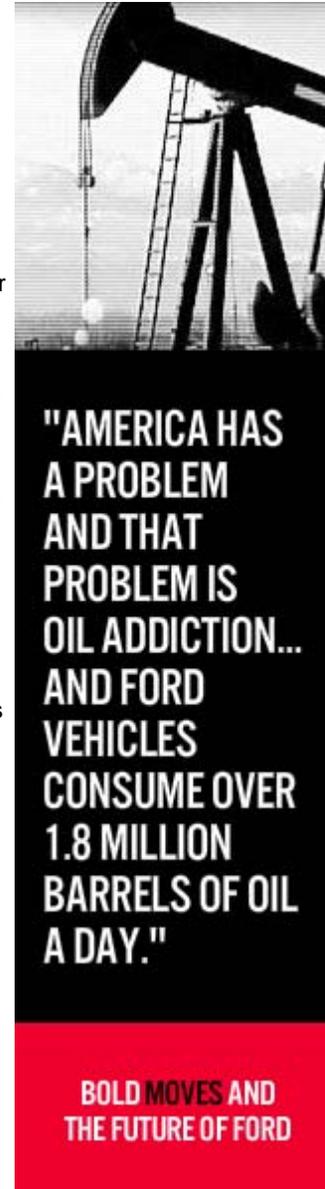
Price: \$40

Web: brookstone.com

The 'A' grade: The sleek way to sleep.

Sony VPL-HS51 Cineza LCD Front Projector

Description: A sure way to win friends fast. Plug it in, and you can watch videos on a 200-inch screen (provided you



have up 30 feet of "throw space" between the machine and the screen). However, the projector can cast a 40-inch picture in high-definition color from 4 to 6 feet away.

Price: \$2,199.99

Web: amazon.com

The 'A' grade: Movie night has a whole new meaning.

Tassimo Hot Beverage System

Description: In about a minute, you can prepare just about anything from a single cup of coffee to a frothy

cappuccino, which is perfect for the late-rising caffeine consumer. The machine uses real milk and prepackaged drink containers, and there is no fussing with a steaming wand. Available in late August at select retailers.

Price: \$129.99

Web: tassimo.com

The 'A' grade: Makes a cup of joe on the go.

Olympus VN-1000

Description: A pocket-size digital recorder that holds up to 1,000 minutes of uninterrupted audio. It's a great substitute for taking written notes during lectures. Control tasks such as file storage with an easy-to-use thumb pad.

Price: \$39.99

Web: olympusamerica.com

The 'A' grade: It always pays attention in class.

Dynex PC Web Camera

Description: Liven up your online chatting and keep in touch with far-off friends with this adjustable camera for your PC. It can create video clips, multimedia

presentations and video e-mail.

Price: \$31.99

Web: bestbuy.com

The 'A' grade: Great excuse for a study break.

Dorm Survival Kit

Description: Designed by a woman for women, the barbara k! kit features a hammer, tape measure and scissors in addition to fun items such as a "Do Not Disturb" sign and a creative guide for decorating your room.

Price: \$19.99

Web: barbarak.com

The 'A' grade: Friend of form and function.

Z'Fogless Lighted Fog-Free Shower Mirror

Description: Get up close and personal with your pores. The mirror attaches with included suction cup, shower enclosure clip or hanger cord, and its LED lights never need replacing, the manufacturer says. A digital clock features month, date and timer displays.

Price: \$39.99

Web: Int.com

The 'A' grade: Eliminates a foggy problem that was a sure pain in the glass.

Haier Midsize Refrigerator

Description: This is more than a mini fridge. Compact enough to squeeze into most dorm rooms, it offers a separate freezer for some serious food storage. Be sure to confirm your room dimensions.

Price: \$348.62 plus shipping (online only)

Web: walmart.com

The 'A' grade: Plenty of space for all your favorite drinks.

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