

Secrets of the geeks



Image: ChatGPT/Kim Komando

🤖 **WOW!** Your cable company charges about \$15 a month, forever, to rent a box you can own for \$60. The airline seat map showing “almost full”? It’s a sales floor, not an inventory list. And a \$12 part could revive that dead dryer. Six trade secrets, Round 2, free.

📖 **Read time:** 2.5 minutes

Every trade has secrets. When I wrote [five repair-counter tricks](#) a few weeks back, your replies all said the same thing: More, please. Fair’s fair. Six new ones, straight from the pros, free of charge.



Secrets from behind the counter

1.



The gate agent's seat map. All that gray doesn't mean sold out. Airlines block seats for elite fliers, families and day-of assignment, then offer you the aisle for \$39. It's a sales floor, not an inventory list. And always book direct. The federal 24-hour rule gives you a free cancellation window. Expedia bookings don't count.

2.



The hotel's front desk magic hour. The 800 number reads a script. The actual front desk can comp late checkout, waive fees and hand out upgrades. Midafternoon is the magic hour, after checkout and before the evening rush, when the desk knows what's sitting empty. Call the hotel directly and say five words: "Is there any flexibility here?" Be kind. Clerks bend rules for kind.

3.



The cable guy's confession. That \$15-a-month "equipment fee" rents a box you can buy for about \$60. It pays for itself in four months. Over a decade, renting costs \$1,800. Check your ISP's compatibility list, buy your own, return theirs and keep the receipt. [Here is the one I recommend.](#)



Fix it like you work here

4.



The appliance tech's \$12 rule. A "dead" dryer can often be resurrected with a \$12 thermal fuse. A "broken" dishwasher is usually the result of a clogged filter you never knew existed. Twist, rinse, done. Before booking the \$150 house call, type your model number and symptom into AI and see what comes back.

5.



The help desk's sacred order. "Have you tried turning it off and on again?" became a joke because it keeps working. A restart clears jammed memory and hung programs. The pro sequence: Restart first, reseal the cable second, panic never.

6.



The photographer's shirtsleeve secret. Hazy photos? Your lens is wearing your pocket lint and fingerprints. Pros wipe the glass before every single shot. For moving kids and pets, hold the shutter for burst mode, then keep the one sharp frame and delete the rest.