

Is your wallet saying “Ho, ho, ho” or “No, no, no”?

December 2014 Newsletter



Charge cards, checkbooks and wallets can really feel the pinch this time of year. The holidays often feel like one big spend-a-thon.

Luckily, there are easy and practical ways to take some strain off your finances — even during holiday season. Here are basic tips for holiday time or anytime:

- **Be conscious of your cash.** ATMs are everywhere nowadays. It's easy to get money on the spot and spend more than you intended.

Bring only the cash you expect to need when you go out. If you have to stop at an ATM, take out an amount you know you can handle. Keep careful records of withdrawals to avoid any low balance or overdrawn account fees.

- **Dine in, not out.** Homemade meals are cheaper and often healthier than restaurant fare. Too busy or tired to cook each day? Rotate meal prep with others in your home. Or cook up a storm on weekends and freeze meals for the coming week.

If you're making a holiday party, plan dishes you can prepare yourself rather than ordering. Or make it a potluck by asking your guests to bring their specialties.

- **Be a super-marketer.** Don't go food shopping when you're hungry. Everything is appealing to a growling stomach! Always be sure to shop with a list.

When shopping for a holiday party, go to a bulk store. That way you can save on basics like paper goods, soft drinks and even some party foods.

- **Spend less on energy.** Call your power company for a free “home energy survey” to identify areas of your house that need more insulation. Always switch off lights and moderate house temperature when you leave for work.

Want to save some money on decorations this year? If you put up lights, use LEDs. You could save up to 80% over the energy cost of incandescent bulbs.¹

Program a timer to turn your lights on and off. Then, if you go out or forget to turn the lights off, your timer will kick in to save money and power.

- **Shop smart.** Shop the holiday sales. Don't forget about “after holiday” specials too. Enjoy more savings by using coupons you get via mail and email.

Also, stick to a budget. Whether you're buying holiday gifts or just shopping for yourself, have a list to help you avoid impulse items. Self-discipline is hard. But it can pay off in avoiding debt—and buyer's remorse!

- **DIY.** Do you pay for housecleaning, repairs or chores? Time to “do-it-yourself!” Even if you don't consider yourself handy, you'll be surprised at jobs you can do with online or in-store direction. Taking care of your own painting, yard work and other labor doesn't just save money. It also provides exercise and stress-release.

Try some of these money-saving tips. You may hear your wallet sigh with relief!

¹www.myshipley.com