



Save

Holiday shopping on a budget

Holiday shopping is around the corner. It can be tempting to spend too much. But no one likes the gift of debt. You don't have to break the bank for a successful holiday. Plan ahead to help reduce stress and overspending.

Before you start shopping, follow these simple steps:

- Make a list of all the people on your holiday list. Check the list and choose who really needs a gift from you.
- Decide how much you can afford to spend for holiday shopping.
- Write down how much you'd like to spend on each person. Add up the total cost. And make sure it doesn't go over the amount you planned on spending.
- If you're shopping online, buy a prepaid credit card and don't spend any more than that. If you're shopping at the store, use cash. Leave your credit and debit cards at home so you don't spend more.

On a tight budget? Here are some tips:

Keep it simple. Make gifts by putting together a few items. Have a favorite recipe? Gather all the dry ingredients and put them into a gift basket with the recipe.

Make a coupon book. This works best for family and close friends. Each coupon can be “turned in” for a special favor or treat. From a massage for a spouse, to extra screen time for a child — the choices are endless.

Shop the discount stores. Try to use discount outlets for a lot of your items.

Cut down the list. Shopping lists can easily get too long. Not everyone expects or even needs a gift.

Get creative. You may not need to shop at all. Think of what will have meaning to your family and give life-long memories. For example, you could throw a party and have everyone bring a dish.

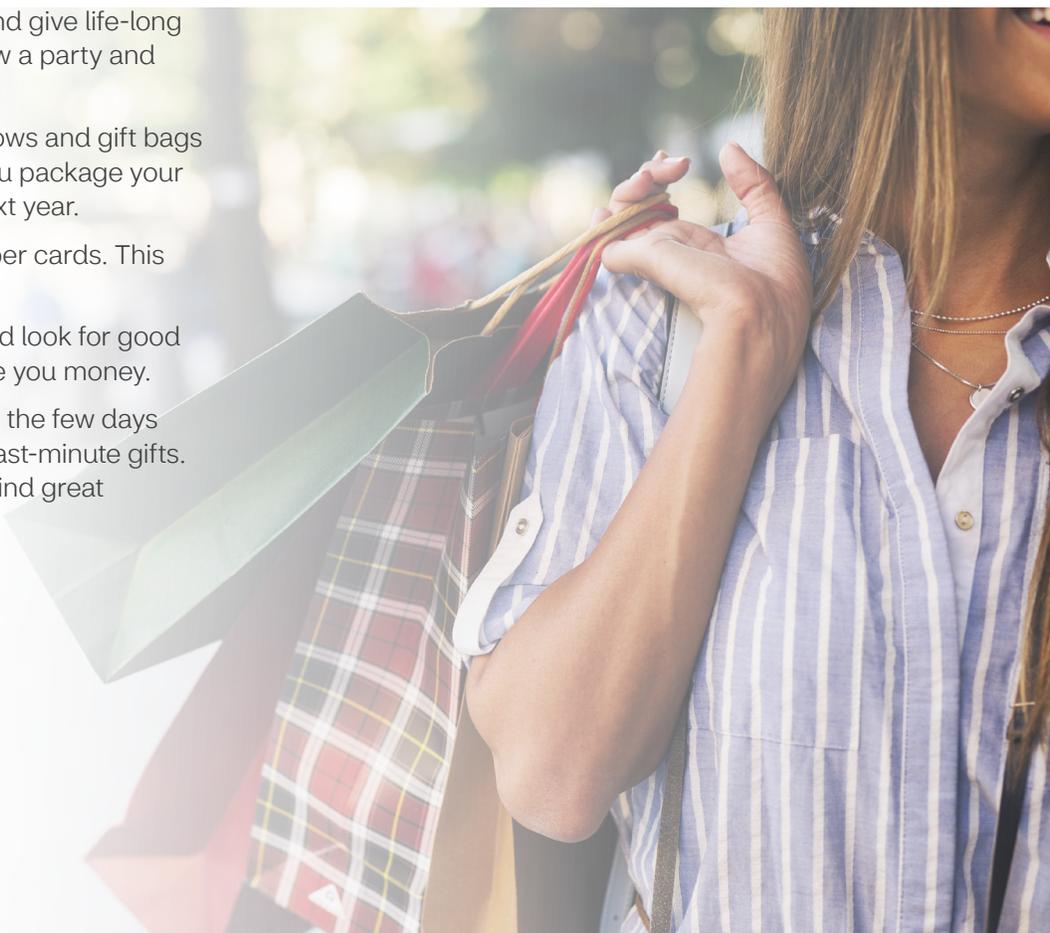
Save on wrapping. Wrapping paper, bows and gift bags can get pricey. Get creative with how you package your presents and save used gift bags for next year.

Go virtual. Send e-cards instead of paper cards. This also saves on stamps.

Buy early. Shop throughout the year and look for good deals. Stocking up all year long can save you money.

Buy late. Some stores discount items in the few days before a holiday. This may be good for last-minute gifts. You can also shop after the holidays to find great discounts and get ready for next year.

We sometimes forget the true meaning of the holiday season. By minding your budget, you can make gift giving fun without spending on credit.



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