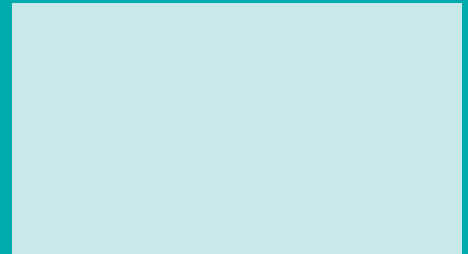




MONEY WISE

VALUING PEOPLE. VALUING MONEY.
MANAGING IN TOUGH TIMES INITIATIVE



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

HOLIDAY SHOPPING ON A BUDGET

Although summer may not seem that far behind us, the holiday season will soon be here! Holidays are often an exciting time of the year. Spending time with family, enjoying time off work, and celebrating with family traditions are enjoyable activities. However, the holidays also can represent added stress due to the crunch on your wallet. Decorations, gifts, and food expenses add up quickly. The months of October, November, and December can be very expensive, in terms of holiday spending.

Holiday shopping can be both a rewarding and stressful experience. Every year, millions of Americans flock to retail and online stores to buy gifts for their family and friends. Unfortunately, poor planning and the pressure to buy the perfect gift often leave many families in debt in the months following the shopping season. If you are worried about overspending this year, the following tips will help you to develop a plan for buying gifts for everyone on your list without breaking the bank.

- **Establish a budget.** Before you even think about stepping foot in a store, prepare your holiday shopping budget. To do this, make a list of everyone who you are planning to buy for and then determine how much money you are able to spend on each person. No matter how small of a gift you intend to give, it is important to include it in your budget.





- **Use cash.** When doing your holiday shopping, use either cash or debit and avoid using your credit card whenever possible. Using cash or debit forces you to avoid spending money that you don't have. Additionally, using a credit card most likely means that you will be paying interest on your holiday purchases.
- **Do not open department store credit cards.** When you are at the cash register this holiday season, the sales associate will most likely offer you an attractive discount on your purchase in exchange for opening a department store credit card. However, that discount will quickly disappear if you are not able to pay your credit card balance in full. Keep in mind that these credit cards often come with annual percentage rates of 20% or higher.
- **Do your research.** Prior to heading out to the stores, take advantage of the Internet. If you know exactly what you want to buy, a quick Internet search will provide you with a list of prices for any given item. Keep in mind that many stores price match, meaning that if you wish to buy from a particular store, they may be able to match the lowest price offered by their competitor.
- **Start shopping early.** Don't plan on waiting for the "holiday season" to arrive to start your shopping. You are likely to find great deals all year round if you keep your eyes open. Starting

your shopping early will save you money and also cut down on the stress associated with holiday shopping!

- **Track your spending.** Be sure that you keep track of your spending so that you know how much money you have already spent before making additional purchases. This is particularly important for shoppers who like to spread out their holiday shopping over the course of the year.
- **Think about what is important to your family.** Before spending, think about what it is about the holidays that your family considers most important. Holiday traditions such as a big family meal may be more important than being able to give a certain number of gifts.
- **Free gift wrap.** During the holiday shopping season, many retailers offer free gift wrap. Taking advantage of these services will save you money on gift wrapping supplies at home and time.
- **Do it yourself!** If you are feeling creative, consider making do-it-yourself gifts for family and friends. Do-it-yourself gift wrap using supplies such as newspaper or paper grocery bags is also a great way to save money during the holiday season.

Keep these tips in mind before your next holiday shopping outing. Remember that it is important to budget and prioritize your holiday spending. Take a moment to think about what is really important to you during the holiday season and enjoy your family and friends!

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