

Surviving the Holidays With Your Sanity Intact



With crowded stores and an ever-growing list of people to shop for, it's easy to get overwhelmed and to overspend on your holiday shopping. No worries, though; we've got you covered! Read on for pre-and post-holiday tips and have yourself a jolly December without breaking the bank.

6 Pre-Holidays Tips

1. Revise your gift list

Chances are, lots of the people you exchange gifts with would be relieved to be taken off your list. Talk to coworkers and acquaintances about just exchanging cards this year, or make a deal to only exchange homemade or inexpensive gifts.

This way, you can focus on buying special gifts for those closest to you instead of generic gifts for everyone you've ever met.

2. Organize a Yankee Swap or Secret Santa

Still got a mile-long list? Try one of these creative solutions! A Yankee Swap or a Secret Santa activity saves money and stress while adding a bit of intrigue to any party. Everyone involved only needs to bring a single gift, and it's always fun.

Set a reasonable price cap on gifts so no one walks out with a candy cane while the person next to them hauls off a flat-screen TV.

3. Bake holiday treats

Reduce the financial weight of the season by whipping up your own holiday treats instead of buying gifts. It's hard to find the perfect gift, but no one turns down a tin of homemade holiday cookies!

4. Make a budget and stick to it

We all plan to stick to a budget this holiday season; make this the year it really happens. Set an absolute limit to how much you will spend on the holidays. This will encourage you to plan your spending rather than grabbing impulse items as you shop.

5. Make use of holiday deals ... but don't get distracted

When prices drop, we sometimes go wild, snatching up random items because we don't want to miss out on those "crazy, low holiday prices." Make use of these deals by buying items on your list at a discounted price – but don't buy things you don't need.

6. Rethink giving

Instead of running to the mall again, think of other ways you can give that will make the world a better place and truly brighten someone's holiday. It's the perfect time of year to volunteer at local soup kitchens, homeless shelters and charity organizations.

2 Post-Holiday Tips

1. Use those gift cards

Gift cards are a typical holiday gift, but they're often forgotten and unused. Put your gift cards in your wallet and spend them creatively. If you're not a fan of on-the-go coffee, use your Starbucks gift card to pick up ground coffee beans to use at home. Rent a movie with your iTunes card. Whatever it might be, just use those gift cards!

2. Regift

You'll probably wind up with a bunch of gifts you don't want. Hold onto them; many gifts can be re-gifted next year or used as birthday gifts throughout the year.

Your Turn: How do you get through the holiday season? Share your best financial survival tips with us in the comments!