

## Shopping Tips for the Holiday Season



As Christmas approaches, we face the excitement of the holiday season. However, many of us also find that along with that excitement comes the strain on our pocket books. There are gifts to buy, houses to decorate, parties to attend which of course means new clothes to buy!!

Heather Cudmore, MOSAIC Credit Counselling Manager, has some advice about how to manage your money at Christmas.

- Make a list and check it twice. Include whom you want to buy for and how much you want to spend on each person and stick to it. Also don't forget to include the costs of entertaining, decorations, cards and wrapping in your Christmas budget.
- Consider drawing names. Most people are relieved when this suggestion is raised.
- Opt for more personal gifts, like your time or baking. Many people truly appreciate a gift of homemade cookies, a casserole or baby-sitting.
- Consider gift certificates – particularly for teenagers for whom it can be difficult to buy. This helps you stick to your dollar limit.
- Get crafty. Create your own decorations and get the kids involved. It's a lot less expensive and a lot more fun.
- Try alternative wrapping. Use leftover fabrics, comic-strip paper, your kids' artwork or have fun making your own with sponges and paint.
- Remember that your children will not remember what you bought them each year, but will remember what you did together. Better to spend time tobogganing, skating, touring the Christmas lights, then to spend money on things that will soon be forgotten.
- Don't fall into the trap of competing with the neighbours. Do what is right for your family.
- Shop early. If you shop too close to Christmas, you're more likely to impulse shop rather than sticking to your list. Impulse shopping often leads to spending more dollars.



- Don't shop when you're tired. This also leads to impulse shopping and spending more just to go home and get off your feet.
- Establish a Christmas fund. Save monthly or spread your shopping throughout the year. This way you don't have the financial shock all at once.
- If your finances are in control, purchase a Canada Savings Bond through your employer and use this money for your Christmas shopping.
- Avoid using credit cards. Cash is best and helps you stick to your limits. Debit cards are okay too as long as you remember to record your withdrawals so you're not surprised by the balance on your next visit to the bank.
- Remember an item is not truly on sale if you cannot pay the bill when it arrives. You most likely will end up paying more in interest payments than you saved.
- Watch out for the 'Don't pay until the new year' promotions. If you don't have the money when you've hit that date, the interest charges can be exorbitant. Rather, save for something a year in advance and then purchase it when you do have the money.
- Avoid using shopping as entertainment on Boxing Day. Instead read a book, go tobogganing, or play a game with your family. Shopping can be costly entertainment.

#### TIPS FOR KIDS & TEENS

Teaching our children good financial habits at Christmastime.

- Be a good role model. If the kids see you splurge at Christmas time and then scrimp through January and February to pay for those purchases, they will learn that Christmas is a time to blow the budget.
- Communicate with your children. If your children are asking for things you cannot afford, explain the situation. It's amazing how much they understand and accept. It also teaches them that money doesn't grow on trees.
- Teach your children to make a list and assign a dollar value to each gift. By doing so, you are demonstrating how to establish a budget.
- If they receive an allowance, have them pay for all or a portion of the gift.
- Remind your children that a gift doesn't have to cost money. Hand-made tree ornaments are treasured by parents for many years. Coupons for cleaning or preparing dinner can be most helpful.

