

Holiday Guide

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5 Tips for Stretching Holiday Buck

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Last Modified: 12/15/2005

12:52:45 PM

Many families are cutting costs this holiday season due to rising gas prices and higher heating bills. But, as gift guru and well-known author [Robin Spyzman](#) explains, this doesn't mean any cheer needs to be cut from your holiday this year!

1. Perfect Your List

Group people together who are all in the same price point (let's say \$20, for example) and try and stock up on a few extra of these gifts that would be enjoyed by anyone for last minute gift giving. Before you purchase a gift, scout out a selection of items to avoid unnecessary returns. Get informed about the stores policy for exchanges and returns. Plus, a practical gift will go further than something they really don't need. Think like Sherlock Holmes to determine a gift that will really be enjoyed from a gift card for the coffee lover at their favorite coffee house to a gas card for the commuter!

2. Surf the Net First

If you are going to shop at the mall or a store, check online to see if there are any coupons or specials. Check with the concierge desk at the malls to see if they offer any incentives like a coupon book or store discount. Shop at stores that offer a complimentary gift wrap. You'll save loads of money with that service alone if your gift comes boxed and ready to be given.

3. Call Ahead

If there's a personal shopping service at a particular store, call ahead of time and request an appointment. They can be extremely helpful saving you time and lining up choices. Let them know who you are shopping for and utilize the service to your best advantage to save time and money. Also, scout the newspapers for sales, coupons and other hot products. Be in the know, before you go shopping!

4. Group like gifts and tastes together

You save time when you can shop for a few people at the same place, but the key is to Make It Memorable! Shop catalogs, brochures, newspaper circulars, and magazines first to get an idea of what's in style and might be a good match for your loved ones. Personalization shows thought, so add their initials or get the gift monogrammed! Also, consider giving a family a "together gift" instead of a gift for each person. From movie tickets to a great game like Cranium or Super Scrabble, there's something for everyone.

5. Set limits on the quantity of gifts

When purchasing gifts for your children, remember how they rush through the unwrapping process. The last gifts don't seem to mean as much as the first few. Consider limiting children's gifts to five pieces or whatever your budget or tradition dictates. Plus, before a child rips open the box, make sure it's something they plan to keep. Go over your gift list and decide on alternatives to dust collecting gifts.

Consider a card or donation to a good cause as the perfect gift! But, try and avoid last-minute expensive shopping sprees and when in doubt, bake a cake, cookies or write a letter of thanks to someone and express your gratitude. Words are free and fabulous!

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