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Holiday Stress: Sticking to your Budget

Tips on how to manage holiday finances

Money problems are the leading cause of holiday stress for Americans according to a survey conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA).

Stress-free Holiday Budgeting Tactics

The best holiday budget began last year—smart shoppers write the holiday gift season into each month's budget, and they buy presents here and there throughout the year.

However, if you're like most, you haven't planned a head and could find yourself living a little tight in January. But don't despair, with proper budgeting and a handful of smart shopping ideas, it is possible to find the perfect gift for everyone on your list, and stay within your budget.

Here are a few tips to help you stick to your holiday budget and help manage your holiday financial stress:

- **Make a list and check it twice!** Revisit your shopping list, does everyone listed on it truly need to be there?
- **Set limits!** Write down a maximum dollar limit for everyone, and then track how much you actually spend.

- **Buy in bulk!** Have something on hand for those unexpected presents. A case of wine, elegant candles, or a tin of homemade cookies are great ideas.
- **Be realistic!** Ask yourself, can you really afford it? Do you have the cash for it? A good rule of thumb is to leave the credit cards at home and if you don't have the cash for it, don't buy it.
- **Trim your expenses!** Can you make some presents yourself, participate in a gift exchange, or only buy for the kids? Look into your options.
- **Shop online!** With gas prices high, consider staying home and shopping online instead. Most retailers will waive shipping fees during the holidays.
- **Get ready for next year!** Remind yourself that next year you plan to buy gifts

throughout the year, rather than during the holiday rush. For starters, take advantage of some of the post-holiday sales and get a few people crossed off your list early on.

- **Get a holiday job!** Even with a good budget, the extra holiday shopping can pinch the pocket book. You could look into getting a seasonal job. Retailers hired 800,000 people for holiday work last year.



Did you know...

A nationwide survey done in early November by the American Psychological Association (APA), found that 61 percent of respondents listed lack of money as their top source of holiday stress, followed by the pressures of gift giving, and credit card debt.