

SPEND SMART THESE HOLIDAYS

Avoid a spending hangover

The holiday season is a joyous time of the year but festive cheer can quickly evaporate come January when the bills start rolling in. The good news is that a bit of forward planning can help reduce the cost of the upcoming holiday season.

Here are six useful tips for savvy holiday season shopping:

1. Pay cash

We all know the best way to keep costs down is to stick to a budget. This isn't easy when you see the perfect present for just a bit more than you had allocated. Overspend a little on each gift and after a hard day's shopping you can end up breaking the bank.

Consider going shopping without your credit cards. Paying cash means if you spend more on one present, you have to spend less on another. Running out of money and having to make a second trip to the busy shops is a great incentive to be disciplined!

2. Watch those hidden fees

With most credit cards charging a foreign transaction fee of 2-3% if you buy your Christmas presents online, the charges can add up. It is worth shopping around as some credit cards charge no fees for overseas purchases. But a word of warning: some of these compensate by charging annual fees.

Look for cards with no annual or foreign transaction fees. It pays just as much to shop around for the most cost effective credit card as it does to shop for bargains!

3. Shop early for bargains

When it comes to shopping for gifts, timing is everything. We still have a few weeks until the holiday season so start looking for bargains now. Retailers know the perennial favourites - you are unlikely to get discounts on items like perfume in the lead up to the annual festive season.

Of course, the best time to buy is often during the post December sales, so stock up on decorations and even presents for next year in the Boxing Day sales.

4. Shop online AND local

Check out websites like eBay, Gumtree

or your local version of Sell Buy Swap (or similar local classified sites). Not only will you find ideas for gifts, you may find some absolute bargains as well.

Local Sell Buy Swap sites – often found via Facebook – offer a convenient no or low fee forum for locating a wide range of goods in your local region. Goods are often low priced - some are even given away for free as many people just want an easy way to 'clear the clutter'. They also provide an easy way to turn your own unwanted items into cash.

5. Do your price research

When it comes to Christmas savings, make sure you compare the costs of gifts online before you leave home. This ensures you will know the cheapest prices around and will be able to negotiate a better deal with retailers.

Once you know those retailers that stock your selected items at the best price, plan out your shopping route so you aren't traipsing back and forth between shops.

6. Get mobile!

Don't forget your mobile devices. According to a Javelin Strategy & Research survey, 56% of shoppers plan to use their phones and other mobile devices to help them comparison shop for gifts.

Smartphone apps are a great way to help you compare prices, download coupons, research products and make informed buying decisions. Bargain shopping is now at our fingertips!

We would all love to be able to afford to lavish our loved ones with expensive presents. At the time of the year when the retail marketing machine is all pervasive, it is easy to lose sight of what is really important.

So don't forget to take stock of what is really meaningful to you and your family during this special time and plan your spending accordingly.

You can then really enjoy the start of a brand new year without the spending hangover.



Let us help you get started on NEXT year's financial goals.

Ask us for a copy of our article 'This year was meant to be different'.