



2022 Holiday Shopping Tips

Holiday shopping seems to come with a new set of challenges every year. This year, inflation and increased cost of living expenses add to the pressure of choosing thoughtful gifts and finishing your shopping on time. Well, don't get your wrapping paper in a twist! We're here with the following tips to help keep your stress levels down and your spending in-check.

Create a buy-for list and set a budget. This should be the number one step before you begin browsing online or heading out to the store. Knowing exactly who you're shopping for and how much you can afford to spend will save you time and preserve your savings account balance. Don't forget to include Secret Santa, White Elephant, or other group swapping gifts. Then, check off each name from your list once their gift has been purchased.

Shop early and spread it out. By starting your holiday shopping early, you're able to stretch out expenses over a longer period of time. This could allow you to spend a smaller portion of each paycheck on holiday gifts and put less of a squeeze on your overall budget. Retailers have begun offering exclusive savings and discounts as early as October, and many downplay single shopping days like Black Friday and Cyber Monday in favor of multiple sales days. Longer-term promotions give you the opportunity to research prices and pile up savings with the best deals. Don't forget to take shipping time into consideration when shopping online. This will help ensure that all your gifts arrive on-time.

Don't wait until the last minute. The closer you get to the actual holiday, the better the chance that gift availability and selection will be limited or nonexistent, especially for "hot ticket" items. Inflated shipping charges are another reason to shop early. Overnight and next-day delivery can sometimes cost more than the item you're purchasing, and will put a bigger dent in your budget.

Use credit wisely. Using a credit card may seem like a good way to spread out your holiday spending. However, the idea of "buy now/pay later" doesn't always work out as planned. Keep in mind that credit cards come with their own set of expenses, like interest charges and fees. There can be unseen costs, too, like negative impacts on your credit score if you miss a payment or open several new credit cards within a short period of time.

However, using a rewards credit card can be a good way of earning cash back or bonus points, especially if you're able to combine it with an in-store sale or discount. It's even better if you're able to pay the entire credit card balance in full each month. Be smart about budgeting for the payments and make sure you're not left with a holiday spending hangover.

Start a holiday savings account. Holiday savings accounts are a great way to save for the holiday shopping season. Our [Christmas Club](#) may be opened any time throughout the year, and we suggest the "set it and forget it" approach. Setup a deduction from your incoming direct deposit and you'll be surprised how much you've saved when it comes time to use it. For easy access, the Christmas Club funds are automatically transferred into your associated ECU Savings Account on November 1st each year (or the first business day after November 1st, if it falls on a non-business day). Ask us for details!