

Tips for Holiday Shopping

by Helen Kornblum

1. Follow Santa's example and make a list. Better yet, create a spreadsheet to cover family, friends, co-workers, and any other people to whom you plan to give gifts.
2. Create a realistic budget. Decide your range of spending for each person on the list. Now add names and budget amounts to your spreadsheet.
3. Look for gift ideas in catalogs and on the Web. Look for price comparisons and advance notice of sales. Note two ideas for each person on your list.
4. Consider "clutter-less" gifts that can be experienced (tickets to a play, a massage), or consumed (specialty food items). Gift certificates allow recipients to select their own gift.
5. Before you head out, empty your purse or bag of all non-essential items to lighten your load. Take an envelope to store all your receipts, marking them for each purchase or recipient as you collect them. Take your shopping spreadsheet!
6. Plan your itinerary so you follow an efficient route to the stores that you plan to shop in. And don't forget about local, independent businesses where service and quality (not to mention easy parking) might make your shopping trip a holiday treat.
7. Shop with a buddy so you can spell each other holding packages or help each other with purchasing decisions. Two heads are better than one to avoid a foolish extravagance.
8. Head out early, wear comfortable clothing, plan to take frequent breaks, and bring a bottle of water. Serious shopping demands good physical conditioning!

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