



HOLIDAY BUDGET: IT'S NOT AN OXYMORON

Are you feeling it yet — the holiday spirit that leads you to buy, buy, buy? It's easy to get caught up in a whirlwind of shopping and spend a lot more money than you intended. But the whirlwind of bills that come due in January should be enough to convince you to create — and stick to — a holiday spending plan.

Be Joyful for Less

Impulse buying can quickly derail your finances. Before you begin your holiday shopping, make a list of everyone you buy gifts for. Then set a separate spending limit for each person based on the total amount you can reasonably afford to spend. Once you've reached the limit you've set, stop buying.

Control Credit Cards

Bringing multiple credit cards with you to the mall may tempt you to overspend. It's probably best to leave them at home.

If you do charge purchases to get rewards or discounts, keep track of what you've charged by writing down the amount of each transaction. Make sure you'll be able to pay off the entire balance when your statement arrives.

Shop Smart

Newspaper flyers can help you compare your gift list with what's on sale at local stores. Always check out prices of big-ticket items at several places before you buy. An online search can save time, gas, and money, even if you eventually buy the item in the store. If you do buy online, look for perks such as free shipping and gift wrapping.

Consider Their Destination

If you're mailing gifts, choose items that are small, lightweight, and easy to pack. Remember to send packages early to avoid having to pay extra for rush delivery.