

# SURVIVING the HOLIDAYS



  
**Springboard**<sup>®</sup>  
Nonprofit Consumer Credit Management, Inc.

Promoting Financial Literacy

Copyright © 2011 by Springboard Nonprofit Consumer Credit Management. This publication is copyrighted. All rights are reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without prior permission of Springboard Nonprofit Consumer Credit Management.

**Legal Disclaimer: Liability claims regarding damage caused by the use of any information provided will be rejected. Information presented is to the best knowledge of the author and editors correct; however, if the reader intends to make use of any of the information presented in this publication, please verify information selected. No information provided here, or materials referenced, is intended to constitute legal or tax advice. You should not rely on our statements (or materials referenced) for legal or tax advice and should always confirm such information with your lawyers or tax professionals, who should be responsible for taking whatever steps are necessary to check all information and personally ensuring that the advice these professionals provide is based on accurate and complete information and research from any available sources.**

# About Springboard

Springboard is a nonprofit organization founded in 1974.

We offer personal financial education and assistance with money, credit, and debt management through educational programs and confidential counseling.



Accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA)

CREDIBILITY • INTEGRITY • ACHIEVEMENT



Member of the Association of Independent Consumer Credit Counseling Agencies (AICCCA)



Certified by the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)



Member of the Better Business Bureau (BBB)



Member of the National Foundation of Credit Counseling (NFCC)

## Our Services Include:

- Credit and Debt Counseling
- Financial Education Programs (seminars and materials)
- Debt Management Plans
- Homeowner Assistance (Foreclosure Prevention)
- First Time Home Buyer Seminars
- Reverse Mortgage Counseling
- Pre-Bankruptcy Budget and Credit Counseling
- Bankruptcy Pre-Discharge Financial Management Instructional Course

“The Power To Move Beyond”

Headquarters Office: 4351 Latham St • Riverside, CA 92501  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 5438 • Riverside, CA 92517-5438  
800.947.3752 • fax: 951.328.7750  
www.credit.org • e-mail: education@credit.org

# Holiday Stress

## DO YOU EVER WANT TO SAY “**BAH HUMBUG!**”?

As you go through the holiday season, there may be some valid reason you feel “blue” this time of year. These points may help explain why you may not be in the holiday mood.

Your childhood memories of the season remember it as more “fun.” You didn’t realize just how much preparation was involved.

- You, or especially your children, have high hopes and expectations.
- You can’t help but be aware of the advertising hype. Are you pressured to BUY?
- Your family or other relationships may be strained at this time of year.
- You may be away from your family.
- Your outlook may have changed as a result of personal events, such as separation, divorce, or death.



# Your Holiday Values

Read and prioritize the following statements. Cross off those that have no importance for you and add any equally important ones that are not included. Remember these are statements of what is important to you so there are no right or wrong answers.

Suggestion: Do this with your family and significant others. First, have everyone fill out one of these forms. Then gather together and discuss what you have written. Use this information to formulate a holiday plan that addresses, as much as possible, each person's needs and desires.

Importance: Rank the importance of each one to you. Use 1 as the most important.

The holiday season is a time:

- \_\_\_ a. To be a peacemaker in the world at large.
- \_\_\_ b. To be a peacemaker in my family.
- \_\_\_ c. To enjoy being with my family.
- \_\_\_ d. To strengthen bonds with my relatives
- \_\_\_ e. To exchange gifts with my family and friends.
- \_\_\_ f. For parties, entertaining, and visits with friends.
- \_\_\_ g. To help those who are less fortunate.
- \_\_\_ h. To create a beautiful home environment.
- \_\_\_ i. To strengthen my religious community.
- \_\_\_ j. For relaxation and renewal.
- \_\_\_ k. To celebrate the birth of Christ (Christmas).
- \_\_\_ l. To celebrate the survival of the Jews (Hanukkah).
- \_\_\_ m. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ n. \_\_\_\_\_



# Organize Your Holiday Shopping

## Make a Plan

Create a holiday budget and set limits on the amount that you plan to spend. Be sure to include all of the holiday expenses including decorations, holiday cards, postage, and gift-wrap.

## Make Lists

After you've set up your budget, make lists of gifts, decorations, and food items which you need to buy.

## Plan a Time to Shop

Running around on lunch hours and evenings after work or shopping with young children is exhausting and not very productive. Arrange for a day or halfday off to do your shopping. You may be able to trade babysitting with a friend to give you more time.

## Be an Efficient Shopper

- If you are looking for a specific gift, "let your fingers do the walking" and call stores to find out if they have it.
- Use malls. Whether it's the local retail mall or an outlet mall, go where you have a choice of stores to shop. If you plan to come back to a store to get something, write down the name of the store. It's easy to forget which store is which!
- Read the newspapers and sales flyers for sales and specials on the day you are going to shop. Make sure that you are going to get the best buy. Use the newspaper to comparison shop.
- Try to shop malls early in the day. On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday malls tend to be less crowded.
- Use catalogs for some of your holiday shopping and for excellent giftgiving ideas.
- Take a pre-determined amount of money with you to keep from overspending. If you use a credit card, paper clip an index card to it. Write down each purchase. Use the credit card with the lowest interest. You may want to use just one credit card for holiday purchases.



# Holiday Shopping List

Person	Gift	Planned Amount	Actual Amount	Charge Cash	Next Year

# Holiday Budget Worksheet

CATEGORY	BUDGET	ACTUAL
<b>Gifts</b>		
Family		
Friends		
Office		
Other		
Wrapping Supplies		
Mailing Expenses		
<i>Total Gifts</i>		
<b>Food</b>		
Baking Ingredients		
Holiday Meals		
Meals Out		
Liquor		
<i>Total Food</i>		
<b>Decorations</b>		
Tree/Garland		
Outdoor/Indoor Lights		
Candles		
Other		
<i>Total Decorations</i>		
<b>Entertainment</b>		
Invitations		
Party Clothes		
Holiday Activities		
Music		
<i>Total Entertainment</i>		
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>		

# Limit Your Unplanned Purchases

## **It's easy to fall into the trap of unplanned purchases. Here's why:**

- Advertising begins at the end of October, bringing the holidays to mind weeks ahead of schedule.
- Displays are set up so that you will “remember” things you “need.”
- There is pressure to “give give give”.
- There is pressure to prove that you love (or are loved) because of the gifts you give or receive.

## WHY DO YOU WANT TO LIMIT UNPLANNED PURCHASES?

- You often will buy something that you don't really want or need.
- You don't get what you actually want.
- You spend more than you comfortably can.
- You spend on things that are not really important to you.

## HOW DO YOU LIMIT SPENDING ON UNPLANNED PURCHASES?

- Give yourself time to shop.
- Make a list before you go with names and the dollar amount you intend to spend, and stick to the plan!
- Provide a set amount of money for impulse purchases.
- Walk around the store with your purchases in your basket or over your arm. Reflect on whether you really want to buy the item. If you do, buy it. If not, put it back.
- Pay with cash. It is sometimes harder to spend cash than it is to put an item on a credit card.

# Money Saving Holiday Tips

- Wrap your holiday gift boxes like they do on TV. Wrap the top and bottom separately. Because the lids simply lift off, the boxes can be reused.
- Invest in “gift sacks” which can be used and re-used for large gifts. Paper holiday tablecloths are also good for wrapping large gifts.
- Comparison-shop for wrapping paper. Buy large quantities to save money. Use yarn instead of ribbon to trim gifts. Buy holiday wrappings and cards AFTER the holidays for next year. You’ll save more than 50%.
- Split the cost of a special gift with someone. Buy an entire family a gift instead of one for each individual.
- Make an inexpensive gift look great with presentation. Put it in a basket with ribbon woven through it. Use colorful tissue paper or cellophane for food gifts.
- Send gifts by the most inexpensive method. Compare UPS and mail rates. Plan enough time so that you can avoid overnight or express shipping.
- Have an “open house” instead of a number of small dinner parties. Parties don’t have to revolve around elaborate food. Have a caroling or tree trimming party. Organize an ice skating party and return to your home for chili or spaghetti.
- Involve your guests when entertaining. Have everyone bring something. Give everyone a “job” to help prepare dinner. Have a “make-your-own” pizza party or taco salad party.
- Organize a progressive dinner. It’s a lot of fun, and many people share the entertaining chores.
- Organize a “cookie exchange”. Anyone who brings three dozen holiday cookies can take an equal number of cookies home. You will have a wide variety of cookies for the holidays.
- Limit your baking to one week before the holidays. You’ll save money and your waistline!
- Accept less than perfect results and let your children do some of the baking or decorating for the holidays.



# Using Mail Order Catalogs

**The Federal Trade Commission Mail Order Rule (1975)** requires that mail order companies:

- Ship merchandise within 30 days or within the time specified in their ads.
- Do not solicit orders unless they can reasonably expect that the orders can be shipped within the stated time.
- Notify consumers about delays and offer them the option of agreeing to the delay or canceling their orders.

## BEFORE YOU ORDER:

- Read the company's return and policy carefully .
- Keep a copy of your order form with the company's address and phone number. Note the date of the order.
- If your check is cashed, keep a copy of the cancelled check. Be careful about giving a company your credit card number unless you are reasonably sure of the company's reputation.
- If you decide to cancel a prepaid order, the seller must mail your refund within seven business days of receiving your notice of cancellation.
- When your order arrives, make sure that it is what you ordered and is in good condition,
- If you have a complaint, work it out through the company's customer service department.



# Tips To Avoid Overspending

- 1) Prepare a budget. (Include party clothes, decorating, and entertaining/Not gifts)
- 2) Make a list of everyone for whom you wish to buy presents. Then write an appropriate price range next to each name on your list. Never exceed your limits.
- 3) Could you make or do something for some of the people on your list? Refer to Holidays On A Budget. Give gifts that are thoughtful and creative rather than expensive.
- 4) Review your credit card balances to see how much more you can afford to spend. Do not exceed your limit.
- 5) Carry only one or two credit cards with you. Otherwise, you may think you're not spending much because the total on each card is fairly small.
- 6) Wrap each credit card in a piece of paper. Every time you use the card, write down the amount. Keep a running total. Compare the figures to your holiday budget.
- 7) Before you buy on credit, know how much the interest is. (Normal price with cash is less than a sale on credit)
- 8) Beware of deferred payment plans. Finance charges may accrue during the deferred payment period and can double the cost of your purchase over a long enough period of time. If you can't afford it now, you probably can't afford it three months from now.
- 9) Pay off your balances at the end of the billing period. Avoid cards where the entire balance is due.
- 10) Keep a shopping diary during the holidays. Note when you buy and what mood triggered your purchase. We tend to overspend when we are tired, angry or nostalgic.
- 11) Don't push yourself to finish shopping if you're tired. When you're exhausted, you are inclined to buy almost anything even if it's expensive.
- 12) Learn to say no to your children. Parents need to learn not to feel guilty when saying "no." Set up a budget with your children to teach them that money is not infinite.
- 13) Avoid credit card scams. Destroy carbons, check billing statements, be careful about giving out credit card numbers over the phone, keep your card in view to avoid extra imprints from being made.
- 14) Would you buy this item if you had to pay cash?.



# Tips To Avoid Overspending

- 15) Reexamine purchases before buying, put back items that aren't on your list or are too expensive.
- 16) Look at how you justify charges. Do you really need a new holiday dress when last year's might do?
- 17) Separate shopping trips (comparing prices, quality) from spending trips (making a purchase).
- 18) Wait for those sales! A sluggish economy this year will bite into holiday sales, so merchants may resort to sales and clearances earlier than usual.
- 19) Ask when items of interest at a store are going on sale.
- 20) Liquidators, buying clubs and factory outlet stores usually offer lower prices.
- 21) Give gifts to adults on New Year's Day and take advantage of after Christmas sales.
- 22) By having a parttime retail job over the holidays, you can get an employee discount and early information about upcoming sales.
- 23) Save money gift-wrapping by using reusable gift boxes, newspaper comics or store shopping bags.
- 24) Begin shopping in January for next Christmas. You can take advantage of sales and never have huge bills.
- 25) Seek counseling or a self-help group such as Debtors Anonymous to help you control your spending.
- 26) At sales, pick up "generic" presents that can be given to anyone: a basket, vase, bowl, even gourmet jam. Then you won't overspend in a last minute panic.
- 27) Buy gifts all year and store in a "gift drawer."
- 28) Use a low interest rate Visa or Master Card instead of a higher rate retail card if you don't pay off your balance in full each month.
- 29) Recognize the warning signs of too much debt. If you are overburdened, it's time to cut back on your debts, not add to them.
- 30) Know what to do if you get in trouble. Contact your creditors to work out a more manageable repayment schedule. In addition, seek budget counseling to help you get your debts paid off and plan for future goals.



# Surviving the Holidays

1. What Thoughtful Or Creative Things Can You do For Friends Or Relatives In Place Of Expensive Gifts?

Person	Gift Idea
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. What Activities Or Relationships Cause You Stress During The Holidays?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How Might You Be Able To Reduce This Stress?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What Spending Issues Surface During The Holidays?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How Might You Deal With These Issues?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Refunds, Exchanges, and Returns

## BEFORE YOU BUY:

Make sure that you understand the store's refund/exchange policy BEFORE you purchase.

Know the answers to these questions:

If you return the item, can you get a refund or is exchange or store credit your only option?

Must you have the receipt or is the tag on the item all that is necessary?

If you choose to return the item, is there a time limit on how long you can wait to return it?

These posted or written statements mean that you cannot return purchased items:

- *ALL SALES ARE FINAL.*
- *NO REFUNDS*

## AFTER YOU BUY:

- Keep all of your receipts.
- If you must return your purchase, be courteous and patient. You may have to wait, but remember that the store employees are probably working as quickly as they can. Be organized so that your return can be made quickly and efficiently.



# Shopping Smarter

Planning ahead can make all the difference when retail shopping. Use this calendar as a rough guide for when to find seasonal sales or discount items.

<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>April</b>
<p><b>Watch for:</b> Post holiday clearance sales Pre inventory sales White sales Martin Luther King Jr. Day Sales</p> <p><b>Best buys:</b> Winter clothing Coats Bedding, linens Holiday cards &amp; gift wrap Swimwear</p>	<p><b>Watch for:</b> President's Day sales Valentine's Day specials</p> <p><b>Best Buys:</b> China, silverware, glassware Rugs &amp; floor coverings Audio &amp; visual equipment Furniture &amp; home furnishings House wares Used Cars Steaks and young turkeys</p>	<p><b>Watch for:</b> Spring &amp; Easter promotions St. Patrick's Day sales</p> <p><b>Best Buys:</b> China &amp; glassware Garden supplies Hardware &amp; paint Rainwear Sunglasses Laundry equipment Fresh fish, spring greens Air Conditioners</p>	<p><b>Watch for:</b> Spring &amp; Easter promotions</p> <p><b>Best Buys:</b> China &amp; glassware Garden supplies Housecleaning supplies Housewares Air conditioners Laundry equipment Fresh fish, spring greens</p>
<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>
<p><b>Watch for:</b> Mother's Day sales Memorial Day sales</p> <p><b>Best buys:</b> Sportswear Outdoor furniture Sporting goods Luggage Jewelry Auto accessories Dairy products &amp; strawberries</p>	<p><b>Watch for:</b> Father's Day sales Bridal &amp; Graduation</p> <p><b>Best Buys:</b> Men's &amp; boy's clothing Tools Linens, bedding Floor coverings Lingerie &amp; hosiery Sleepwear Women's shoes House hunting Asparagus &amp; cheese</p>	<p><b>Watch for:</b> Independence Day sales</p> <p><b>Best Buys:</b> Swimsuits &amp; beachwear Garden supplies Refrigerators &amp; freezers Sportswear &amp; equipment Fabric Bedding Rugs Furniture Fresh garden vegetables</p>	<p><b>Watch for:</b> Summer clearance sales Back to school sales</p> <p><b>Best Buys:</b> Appliances Sports equipment Garden furniture August white sales Office &amp; school supplies Fresh vegetables &amp; fruits</p>
<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>
<p><b>Watch for:</b> Back to school sales</p> <p><b>Best buys:</b> Car clearances Fall fashions Housewares China &amp; glassware Children's shoes Auto batteries Radios Hunting gear Eggplant, squash, cabbage &amp; apples</p>	<p><b>Watch for:</b> Columbus Day sales Halloween</p> <p><b>Best Buys:</b> Major appliances Furnaces Furniture Hosiery Rugs &amp; carpet Fall/winter sportswear Apples, potatoes, pumpkins &amp; onions</p>	<p><b>Watch for:</b> Thanksgiving &amp; "Black Friday" sales Veteran's Day Sales</p> <p><b>Best Buys:</b> Home improvement supplies Shoes Blankets Bulbs, trees &amp; shrubs White goods Christmas gifts &amp; toys Nuts, small onions, winter squash</p>	<p><b>Watch for:</b> Christmas gift &amp; toy promotions Post Christmas sales</p> <p><b>Best Buys:</b> Used cars Women's holiday dresses Resort &amp; cruise wear Coats Children's wear Citrus fruits</p>

www.credit.org  
**Springboard**<sup>®</sup>

Springboard Nonprofit Consumer Credit Management, Inc.  
4351 Latham Street  
Riverside, CA 92501

PO Box 5438  
Riverside, CA 92517-5438

1-800-WISE-PLAN (800.947.3752)

[www.credit.org](http://www.credit.org)

[springboard@credit.org](mailto:springboard@credit.org)



Credibility : Integrity : Achievement

