



Potty Pointers

Happy Holiday Spending—more joy, less debt

Make a list and check it twice

Make a list of names and jot down gift ideas. Use your talent and imagination for creative gift ideas that can be less expensive like framed photographs, craft items, a coupon for babysitting or tennis lessons, etc. Assign a spending limit for each name.

Be realistic

Limit your budget to what you can realistically afford. Buy only one present per person. Buy only for people you really care about. Talk to family members about setting a dollar limit on gifts or drawing names.

More than gifts

Plan for other holiday expenses such as travel, decorations and food. Use the Holiday Spending Calculator online at www.bankrate.com.

Kid stuff

Ask your kids to prioritize their lists. Limit expensive gifts. Look for sales or coupons. Give jointly with grandparents on big ticket items. Shop discount and dollar stores for small gifts and stocking stuffers. Guide children to focus on the spirit of the holidays instead of gifts. Enjoy family traditions that cost little or no money. Watch *It's a Wonderful Life* and pop your own popcorn. Bake cookies or make wreaths and deliver to neighbors and friends.

Cash or Credit?

Pay with cash. If you must use a credit card, set up a strategy now to pay it off fast.

Shopping

Avoid impulse buys. Comparison shop. Watch for sales. Stick to your list. Remember, overspending now leads to financial stress in the New Year.

