

# HOLIDAY SHOPPING TIPS

FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT NORTHERN CREDIT UNION

Is it possible to escape the holidays without a financial hangover in January? We say definitely. Here are a few shopping tips and tricks that will help you have a very merry holiday season.

**TIP 1 THE BUDGET:** Without a budget, your shopping style will have no limits, which is a slippery slope to debt. The recommended budget for holiday shopping is 2% of your annual income. Determine how much you are able to spend and then allocate money to each recipient (flip this over to use our Holiday Budget Builder). Once this is set, you can shop happily within your budget, guilt free!

**TIP 2 RUSH, RUSH, RUSH:** Holiday shopping sprees can lead to over-spending. While shopping, try not to eat out. These meals are not included in your holiday budget! Prepare meals ahead of time to eat when you get home.

**TIP 3 CLIP COUPONS:** Coupons are back, and better than ever. Before you start your shopping, check online coupon hubs (like [www.retailmenot.com](http://www.retailmenot.com)) for coupons that can be used in-store and online.

**TIP 4 FROM THE HEART:** Although technology is always evolving, thoughtful homemade gifts will stand the test of time. Give a homemade ornament, photo album or even a fridge magnet. The recipient will hold on to it for years to come.

**TIP 5 USE POINTS:** Most credit cards (including ours) offer point systems for using their cards. Points can be redeemable for travel, gift cards, and other great merchandise. Check how many points you have and see if they can be put toward anyone on your gift list.

**TIP 6 TO: ME, FROM: ME:** It can be tempting to shop for yourself, but these purchases are definitely not in your holiday budget. Instead of buying those cute stilettos or that iPad you want, give your loved ones hints about what's on your list this Christmas. If you don't receive it, check the stores after Christmas, when the sales start.

**TIP 7 THE BIG PAYOFF:** In January, the big credit card bill arrives in the mail signaling that the holiday fun is over, and reality has returned. Credit card companies charge huge interest rates, if you carry a balance, your debt could double in only 4 years. If you are unable to pay in full, look into a line of credit with a lower interest rate than your credit card; the debt will be smaller and much easier to manage.

*Happy Holidays*



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