



The Consumer Council

The Consumer Council Budgeting for Christmas Presents

Christmas Presents

Do you feel under pressure and tempted to spend money that you cannot afford at Christmas? It is estimated that we overspend by £174 on presents every year. It can be a distressing time for some people, when the January bills hit the doorsteps and they have little money left for things like heat or food.

To help you stay within your budget, the Consumer Council has put together some tips to help you.

1. First of all get a pen and paper. Write down your income between now and Christmas.
2. Then work out your household bills and outgoings. Take this away from your income. What is left will go towards Christmas expenses.

Income: _____

Household bills and outgoings: _____

What's left for Christmas: _____

3. Use the Consumer Council's Christmas Present List on the next page.
4. Write your present list. You should limit this to very close friends and family and aim to stay within your budget.
5. In the 'Estimated Amount' column, write down the maximum amount that you plan to spend on each person's gift. Then add up the items in the 'Estimated Amount' column.
6. Is there a danger you will blow your budget? Reduce some or all of the amounts until you reach a total that you can afford and place this in the Affordable Amount column. Then add up the items in the 'Estimated Amount' column. Put this amount in the 'total box'.
7. Remember that some of the best presents don't cost anything to give. A hand-written voucher with a promise to baby-sit or clean the house could mean a lot more than useless gadgets or tasteless toiletries!



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Tips on Going Shopping

1. Once you begin your Christmas shopping, aim to find gifts for each person on your Christmas present list within your budget.
2. You can start by using the Internet to compare prices. This will give you a rough idea of what you will pay for presents. If you are a member of the local library, you can access the Internet for free!
3. Cut out the impulse buys and stick to your shopping list – unless it is something **really** important.
4. Do not 'top up' on presents. If you buy a present below the budget you have set, don't use the rest of the budget to buy that person something extra!

Organising a Secret Santa

Secret Santa is a way of organising mystery gifts, so that everyone gets something suited to them, and nobody goes on a spending spree.

1. Family and friends get together and put all their names on a list. Then they set a spend limit – (for example no one is allowed to spend more than £10 on each person).
2. You put names on the list into a hat and each person picks out a name. You buy a present for the name of the person that you pick out. You don't tell the person that you have bought them a gift – it is meant to be anonymous! Once you've bought the present, you wrap it and put the name of the recipient on the packaging.
3. All the gifts are placed under the Christmas tree. You get together with friends and family and open the presents.

Group Discussion – Exercise One

1. Have you ever used Secret Santa before? Do you think that Secret Santa would suit you, your friends and family?
 - Why?
 - Why not?

2. Some of the best presents don't cost anything to give. A hand-written voucher with a promise to baby-sit or clean the house could mean a lot more than useless gadgets or tasteless toiletries! Do you think that this would suit you, your friends and family?
 - Why?
 - Why not?

3. Do you think that you would use the Consumer Council's Christmas present list this year?
 - Why?
 - Why not?

Christmas Spending problem Page

Group Exercise – Exercise Two

To help you learn more about your spending habits at Christmas, divide into small groups and discuss the following issues.

Christmas Spending Problem Page

1. Your friend Anne is on a tight budget. When she calls in to a shop to buy essential groceries, she comes out of the shop with things like 'buy one get one free' chocolate bars and battery-operated singing Snowmen! What budgeting tips would you give her – without hurting her feelings?

2. Jim and Sarah feel under pressure to spend £500 each on their three children at Christmas. Last year they were still paying back the debt in April and you watched them struggle with the household bills. What budgeting tips would you give them – without hurting their feelings?

Christmas Spending Problem Page

Group Exercise – Answers to Exercise Two

Christmas Spending Problem Page

1. Your friend Anne is on a tight budget. When she calls in to a shop to buy essential groceries, she comes out of the shop with things like 'buy one get one free' chocolate bars and battery-operated singing Snowmen! What budgeting tips would you give her – without hurting her feelings?

- You could suggest that she writes out a shopping list and sticks to it.
- You could suggest that lots of items get slashed in the January sales and she might want to save her money until then.

2. Jim and Sarah feel under pressure to spend £500 each on their three children at Christmas. Last year they were still paying back the debt in April and you watched them struggle with the household bills. What budgeting tips would you give them – without hurting their feelings?

- You could suggest that it really is the thought that counts at Christmas and spending money can't buy happiness!
- You could suggest that they write a budget and stick to it. You could suggest that they cut their budget significantly.
- You could remind them of last year's Christmas debt and if it is really worth the miserable feeling of being in debt in April.
- You could suggest that they manage the expectations of their kids to remind them that money doesn't grow on trees. The BBC web site has ideas on overcoming pester power.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/family_matters/celeb_pester.shtml