



5 Ways to Survive the Holiday Shopping Season

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The holiday shopping season can be a real source of stress for many reasons: money strain, crippling pressure, and conflict inside and outside of the malls. There are too many things you need to attend to in such a short amount of time that it's just *too* stressful!

However, *there are ways to minimize your stress level and stay on budget.*

Try some of these simple holiday shopping tips:

- 1. Shop Early.** It's extremely satisfying and rewarding to complete your tasks early. You eliminate nearly all of the holiday stress, unless you have some big entertaining to do. Even in that case you can plan early so you know exactly what to do and when. While you might miss out on some of the holiday deals by shopping early, the truth is that *there are sales all the time if you just look.*
- 2. Write a Shopping List.** If you preplan all of your shopping, you'll stay organized and you'll stay on budget. Make a list of every person that will be receiving a gift from you. Also, list other items you need to shop for such as decorations or food items. Give yourself a preliminary budget for item. You'll likely have different budgets for, say, a colleague at the office versus your children.
- Remember that children sometimes place value in the "number" of presents they receive. While it's a good idea to teach them that it's the gift and togetherness that matters, you probably don't want to have drastic differences in the amount of presents that each child gets.

3. Get In and Out. If you must shop during peak times, try to have at least an idea about the items you're looking for. If you're shopping with a friend and the line is super long, you can even have a friend wait in line while you shop. This will help you to "get in and out" without the expected long delays.

- If you must shop alone try getting to the store at the time of opening. As long as they're not advertising door busters, you shouldn't have the problem with long lines.

4. Shop Online. Shopping online can be a great alternative; ***you might not even need to go into a store at all***. If you'd rather see the items before shipping, you can even shop at your favorite store online and set up in-store pick up. Shopping online is great for comparison shopping for staying on budget. You know what something should cost because you can quickly see the price at several different stores.

5. Shop Safe. Whether shopping online or in-store, you need to remember to stay safe. When you're shopping in-store remember to keep your credit cards safe and if you're paying cash, don't bring it all out of your wallet at once. Shopping online is safer than you might think, but it's still important to use your instincts and shop smart. If you stick with major retailers, they have plenty of safety measures taken care of for your shopping experience. If you're unsure about the site you're shopping on, do some more research into the company and make sure that they're using secure carts.

Remember to ***stay on budget*** and ***take frequent breaks from the stress***. Holiday shopping can actually be a fun time if you plan carefully. Now it's on to the gift wrapping!