



Maintain Your Budget During the Holidays

The holiday season is upon us, and that likely means extra shopping, gifts and entertaining! Did you know that the average shopper is expecting to spend \$1,400 this holiday season? In order to make your season merry, GreenPath has a few ideas about maintaining your budget during December.

- 1. Plan ahead.** Determine how much you need for the holidays. Don't forget that holiday spending includes more than gifts. We have more get-togethers with friends and family from out of town, and we tend to spend more on gas, since we are driving around trying to find that perfect gift.
- 2. Get creative.** Consider homemade presents, like a plate of fresh-baked cookies, and, for a nice personal touch, include the recipe. Creating a coupon book for chores or maybe even an offer to watch your next door neighbor's kids, so they can go out shopping, is another great idea.
- 3. Give family or group gifts.** Think of an experience the whole family can enjoy, such as a pass to a nearby metro park or gift certificate to a restaurant or the movies. For

your boss, get together with other co-workers to purchase a gift together.

- 4. Research big ticket items.** Keep track of the prices, so you can find who is selling the item for less. Look online and review the store ads. And don't forget about those apps that are designed to compare prices at different stores. Nothing hurts more than to buy an expensive gift, only to find it for less at another store.
- 5. Set a limit and stick to it.** Remember, spending more on one person means spending less on another. It is difficult to find a gift that costs the exact amount you want to spend, so one strategy is to give gift cards. That way you can spend exactly what you intend. Plus, many stores offer perks, like extra gas points or a discount the next time you shop.

One last thing to remember during the holiday season is that, over time, we look back fondly on the experiences, not necessarily the gifts! Happy holidays!

December Webinars Focus in on "Why We Buy" and Look Ahead to 2017

Accel has two informative, free webinars on tap for December, related to setting goals and being financially well.

Why We Buy: The Psychology of Spending Wednesday, December 14, noon ET

It seems we buy something every day, whether it's gas for the car or food for the dinner table. But why do we buy what we buy? In this "Psychology of Spending" webinar, you will learn about the external factors that influence our buying behavior.

Get some tips to help you save from this always free and informative webinar!

Get Financially Fit in 2017 Wednesday, December 28, noon ET

As the year draws to a close, many people will be making New Year's resolutions. Some will get to the gym to get physically fit, while many of us will vow to take better care of ourselves in the personal finance department!



To sign up for any of these personal finance webinars, log on to www.greenpath.com/accel-webinars.



Join our GreenPath Facebook Friends Page

In June, GreenPath launched a new closed Facebook group exclusively for our clients.

In our first six months, nearly 800 clients have signed up, and, we hope you will join our group and take part in some great conversations!

We hosted our first “Getting to Know You” photo contest in November with nearly 60 photos submitted! It was exciting to see (and read) about what our friends value most in their lives! We will have another contest coming up in December!

Because this is a closed, private group, you will be able to interact with clients like yourself in a non-judgmental

atmosphere. Find out what’s working for others, share your successes, offer support to clients just starting out, ask questions, and receive feedback and tips.

If you have a Facebook account, simply request access at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GreenPathFriends>. We will confirm and then you can jump right in!

Do you have questions or ways we can make your GreenPath experience better? If so, please email us at suggestions@greenpath.com.



Couples and Holiday Budgeting

With the holiday season underway, you’ll likely be shopping more for gifts and step up your entertaining. Those with spouses or significant others likely will need (or want) to get buy-in from the other, when it comes to determining a budget for the holidays. So, as not to get hit with a credit hangover in January, here are a few tips GreenPath has put together, to keep a couple’s holiday budget merry and bright.

- 1. Open communication is key.** Most couples do have a routine time in the month when bills are paid and the budget is reviewed. This is a good time to have a discussion about differences in holiday spending habits and financial goals. It is important to come with an open mind, not blaming or finger-pointing, but rather focusing on shared goals.
- 2. Even if you are on different ends of the saving/spending spectrum, looking for common ground is important,** when it comes to buying gifts. It will be necessary to look at your bigger budget picture: Wanting to take a vacation in 2017, wanting more in savings, or addressing a neglected home repair, are all examples of shared concerns and goals that will have to be considered. Focusing on a plan to achieve those goals, and making that plan a priority, might help get you and your spouse on the same page.

- 3. Some couples find it helpful to maintain separate checking accounts and have one shared checking/savings** for shared bills and expenses, and savings for shared goals. If a shared account is considered though, it is important to consider what is fair, when it comes to purchasing gifts.
- 4. It could be a good thing, if you and your spouse are on different ends of the savings/spending spectrum!** If there is open communication, in a healthy relationship, this could be a really good system of checks and balances. The saver will make sure that there is savings, while the spender will make sure there is a quality of life.

So, make that list and check it twice! Remember to involve your spouse or significant other, and getting buy-in on what you’ll purchase this holiday season. A bit of discussion, and list-building, will go a long way in making this a great holiday season!



As a member of (Credit Union), you can take advantage of the **Accel**, a program of GreenPath, Inc. Accel is a **free** financial education and counseling service. For more information, call 1-877-33ACCEL (332-2235) or visit us on the web at www.accelservices.org.

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