



flood in for the festive season. Over the next few pages you can read Easy Debt Solution's guide on how to have a financially stress free Christmas and New Year, and learn how to avoid the expensive pitfalls of Christmas.

There are five key golden rules:

Many people fall into the same trap each Christmas—overspending on presents, going overboard with luxury food, buying and drinking too much....only to have a rude awakening when the credit card bill arrives in January.

Why is debt a problem at Christmas?

Christmas puts a great strain on the family budget. There is an enormous pressure on everyone to spend lots on entertaining, buying presents and having expensive fun. It can be particularly difficult if you have children.

The effects of the holiday season can start to be felt at the beginning of the New Year, as the bills begin to

1. Don't ignore the problem—it won't go away. The longer you wait the worse it will get.
2. Don't borrow money to pay off your debts or to pay for Christmas.
3. Don't wait until the New Year - act today to make a difference. You can contact Easy Debt Solutions right through the festive period to seek debt help.
4. Don't be caught out. Start planning your spending as soon as possible.
5. Don't be afraid to make use of discounts, vouchers and sales—who will ever know?

***Finish 2010 as you mean to start 2011...
with a little help from Easy Debt Solutions.***



Be realistic about what you can afford. The worst form of Christmas shopping is last minute-panic purchasing, putting everything onto your credit card and not thinking through your decisions.

If you can afford to pay for goods don't use credit unless it really does work out to be cheaper - e.g. a cash back credit card or 0% interest card. Try to use only one card so you can keep track of your spending.

Be wary of "Buy Now, Pay Later" offers. Are you sure you will be able to afford it when the bill arrives? There are normally penalties for late payment so double check you can afford it.

Budget! The best advice for Christmas is be prepared. Use the templates in this booklet as a guide. This will allow you to plan your spending - ensuring you're less likely to blow your Christmas budget.



christmas to do list.

Christmas may be a time for giving, eating, drinking and being merry. Many people fall into the same trap each Christmas—overspending on presents, going overboard with luxury food, buying and drinking too much....only to have a rude awakening when the credit card bill arrives in January.

Here are some tips to help keep your spending, and waistline, in check.



The Big Brands!

Don't just buy the big brands because they are familiar to you. You are paying extra for the advertising and marketing which has gone into making the brand a "big" brand.

Supermarkets make their own brands as uninviting as possible to ensure shoppers are persuaded to pay more for the nicer-looking packaging, regardless of the taste of the product.

ACTION:

Change brand level.
If you always buy big brands switch to the supermarkets own brands. If you always buy the supermarkets own brands switch to the value brand. The savings will soon mount up!

Loyalty Points

Make use of all the loyalty points you have accumulated over the year. The UK has more than £5.2 billion worth of unused points and vouchers - use or lose them!

The average British family throws out a third of the food they buy - think before you shop.

Don't forget the average supermarket is only closed for 2 days over the holidays - don't bulk buy.

ACTION:

Use loyalty points as the basis for your Christmas shopping.

split the cost!

If you are hosting Christmas dinner, why not get your friends and family to each cook a course? You can then share the responsibility, cost and effort of cooking - while enjoying someone else's specialty dish.

Christmas is about indulgence so what better way to indulge than use your time to do something you wouldn't normally have time to do. You could even be creative and use it to make some of your Christmas presents at the same time.

Action:

Be creative.

Overspent?

If you have overspent at Christmas and are getting deeper and deeper into debt just for the sake of a "good" Christmas then it may be time to seek help.

Don't ignore your debts and hope they will go away. We can help you with free, confidential and independent advice.

Action:

Call today on 0800 3777 549



BUDGET PLANNER

<u>Income (£)</u>		<u>Expenditure (£)</u>	
Your salary/wages		Mortgage/Rent	
Partners salary/wages		Council Tax	
Child benefit		Gas/Electricity	
Tax Credits		Water	
Any other income		Home Insurance	
Total Income		Telephone & Internet	
		TV License	
		Life Insurance	
		Car Finance	
		Road Tax & MOT	
		Petrol/Diesel/Parking	
		Travel Fares (Bus/Trains)	
		Food Shopping	
		Clothing & Shoes	
		Mobile Phones	
		Toiletries	
		Other	
		Total Expenditure	

- ✓ Think through your circumstances, get a clear idea of what money is coming in and going out.
- ✓ When calculating your budget choose **monthly or weekly** figures not both!
- ✓ Try and figure out what expenditure is regular and essential and which isn't. Christmas most definitely isn't. This will help you to understand where your money is going and where you might be able to save money.
- ✓ You don't have to account for every last penny in your budget but make sure you don't forget about regular small expenditures, for example daily newspapers, which can add up over time.
- ✓ For the income section use the salary you earn after tax, and only include overtime payment if it is a regular feature. Do not include it if you only work overtime sporadically or over the various holidays.
- ✓ Disposable Income (DI) is the amount of money you have left after the essentials have been paid. This could go towards your Christmas presents or your savings, but is definitely **not** needed for day to day living.
- ✓ When you draw up your first budget you might not know everything about your incomings and expenditure. It may be useful to repeat this budgeting exercise every couple of months to check you are still on the right track. Ensure you re-address and re-adjust your budget to ensure it works for you and your needs. You can download as many copies as necessary from our website—yourdebtxpert.com. **REMEMBER:** The budget and suggested heading are a mere sample, everyone will have different incomings and outgoings – define your own needs and stick to it. You've worked hard for your money, don't waste it.
- ✓ If you are unsure as to what you are spending on food, toiletries etc, base your findings on those from a recent government statistics - £45 per person per week.

Total Income

Total Expenditure

Disposable Income (DI)



There are no right or wrong answers—budgets are unique to you.

www.easydebtsolutions.com

0800 3777 549

What are the debt expert's top-ten tips for Christmas?

Make a list of all the people you need to buy for and decide what you are going to purchase before you go shopping. The first question you should ask is *"What can I afford to buy?"* not *"How can I pay the least for it?"*

This way there is no room for inspiration. Use the planner on the next page to help.

Why not do a Secret Santa with your friends? Put everyone's name in a hat, and allocate a price limit which no one can exceed. Everyone buys for one person—allowing you to get one really good present instead of lots of smaller presents. If you don't want to buy for only one friend—set limits for the amount you can spend overall for all your loved ones.

Be wary of extended warranties for your electrical presents. Stores will try to sell you their extended warranties and this may prove expensive. Check the manufacturers warranty; this will normally last for the first year after purchase which is usually when most faults occur. For more information as to what shops are legally obliged to do for faulty or damaged goods, see consumerdirect.gov.uk.

Don't run up an overdraft without talking to your bank first. Banks can legally charge you up to £30 for informing you of the unauthorised charge, plus you will have to pay the overdraft and the incurring daily interest.

Don't forget the important Christmas postal dates. If you are organised send everything 2nd class (18th Dec) - save yourself the extra expense of 1st class (21st Dec).

Remember that some of the biggest household bills of the year arrive in January just when the bills from Christmas spending start to flood in.

If you know exactly what you are buying for your family and friends then compare the price of at least one other retailer on the high street or online before you buy. Use an online comparison site to save you trawling numerous websites.

Don't forget the spirit of Christmas. If you can't afford to buy expensive presents for your children why not arrange special days out for them.

If you are expecting Christmas to be a struggle use it as an incentive for a financial makeover in 2011. Use the budget template to start planning. Why not download the free e-book from yourdebtexpert.com for more information and advice on the various debt solutions? Alternatively give us a call to speak in confidence:
0800 3777 549

If there are any friends and family that you won't see until into the New Year, hold off buying presents for them until the January sales.



A little bit of planning and research can provide you with some great Christmas present ideas. Good presents can be one of the best ways to show your love for your nearest and dearest, but that doesn't mean you have to choose the most expensive gift in the shop.

Present Ideas

1. Why not make some of your presents?

There are loads of gifts that you can make quickly and easily. Everything ranging from flavoured alcohol to personalised calendars can be made on a budget — giving your friends a personalised thoughtful present and saving you money.

2. Stagger your Christmas shopping.

Start it as soon as possible. This will remove some of the pressure on you and your budget. Take this planner with you and **stick** to it!

3. Go online.

Why not send an e-newsletter for the adults in

your present list and tell them your shopping is getting out of hand. Suggest you set a price and age limit for presents and have a lucky dip of present buying for the rest. It may surprise you how many people will find this proposal a great idea. Don't keep trying to keep up with those around you—be smarter with your money.

4. Charity

Instead of giving gifts that might be slightly “unwanted” why not donate to your favourite charity in the individuals’ name instead? Many of the bigger charities now have gift catalogues where you can specify a gift in someone else name.



cut out and keep

Present Planner

	Max. spend (£)
Partner	
Children	
Mum	
Dad	
Brother	
Sister	
In-Laws	
Friends	
Cousins	
Aunties	
Uncles	

Don't forget that the majority of employees will be paid early for Christmas but won't receive another wage until the end of January—almost six weeks later! Ensure you budget accordingly and have enough money to last once the festive season is over.





We hope that you found this short guide to Christmas useful. Remember that everyone has a different set of circumstances and a different story. Debt is a modern day problem, and we have the modern day solutions to help you resolve your current difficulties, allowing you get on with Christmas and the rest of your life, leaving your worries behind.

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Useful links:
Luvurmoney.com
Royalmail.com
Consumerdirect.gov.uk



This booklet is based on journalistic research. It does not constitute financial advice. Any information should be considered in regard to specific circumstances. All tips are followed at your own risk and should be followed up with your own research



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