

# Holiday Spending Hints

## Shop S.M.A.R.T.—Making The Most Of Your Holiday Shopping Budget

(NAPSA)—Making the most of your holiday budget—and avoiding holiday debt in disguise—can make the season much merrier and it may be easier with a few tips from the experts.

According to an HSBC-North America survey, Americans spend between \$800 and \$1,200 on their annual holiday shopping. The survey also found that 23 percent of customers said they didn't know when they would pay off their holiday bills. To help head off budget problems, Loretta Abrams, HSBC's vice president of Consumer Affairs, recommends that people shop S.M.A.R.T. this holiday season—that is, have a spending **S**trategy, **M**ind the maximum, give gifts that **A**ppreciate, **R**epay credit card charges within three months and **T**rim your shopping list.

Here's how it breaks down:

**Strategy:** Have a plan on how you will manage your holiday spending. For some people, that means getting started well before the December rush and pressure to spend.

**Mind the maximum:** Establish a limit on how many gifts to buy and the amount to spend on each gift. Perhaps most importantly, keep well within the maximum limit on your credit cards. Maxing out your credit card limits has a significant and negative impact on your credit score and using cash can help you keep in line.

**Appreciate the gift:** Think about gifts that have value and



**Smart shopping can help you head off holiday budget problems.**

appreciate over time, like savings bonds, “two for one” certificates or gifts that save the recipient money. A thoughtful gift for a college student might be a gift card for a campus bookstore or a local restaurant. Be aware of gift card fees. Some gift cards depreciate.

**Repay in three:** Pay off all holiday debt by March 31. Having this goal in mind can help you stay within your holiday budget.

**Trim your list:** Take a hard look at your gift list and consider limiting gift giving to just immediate family or just the children in the family. You could also save by organizing a holiday gift pool for the family or office, and thus only having to buy one gift.

And...save the best gift for yourself this holiday season by sticking to a budget, closely managing your overall debt and protecting your credit score. For more information, visit [www.yourmoneycounts.com](http://www.yourmoneycounts.com).