

Holiday Shopping Tips

Holiday Shoppers Turn To The Convenience Of Gift Cards

(NAPSA)—This year, many American consumers are turning to gift cards as a solution for everyone on their shopping lists. Gift cards are a convenient present that can be purchased at a variety of locations including retail outlets, gas stations and grocery stores.

In addition, an increasing number of financial institutions are offering “general use” gift cards, which can be used at any location where debit cards are accepted. This product enables purchasers to complete their holiday shopping while doing their routine banking and to avoid busy shopping locations. It also makes it easier for recipients to use the cards at a location of their choice.

Gift cards purchased at banks, credit unions and savings banks often carry either a Visa® or MasterCard® logo. These cards can be used anywhere Visa or MasterCard are accepted, including Internet Web sites. If they are ever lost or stolen, they can easily be replaced, unlike cash or gift certificates. Financial institution gift cards that are not Visa or MasterCard branded can be used anywhere PIN debit is accepted.

According to a recent ValueLink survey, the popularity of gift cards continues to grow, with some 64 percent of U.S. adults, or a projected 139 million people, buying or receiving them annually, up from 59 percent last year.

“Gift cards eliminate the stress of having to find what the ‘person-who-has-everything’ wants this year,” said Cindy Ballard, executive vice president of PULSE EFT Association, one of



Gift cards are a thoughtful, convenient option for both giver and recipient.

the nation's leading ATM/debit networks. “Gift cards are just as convenient for the recipient as for the purchaser.”

A gift card recipient has the flexibility to choose how to spend the funds on the card. It can be used all at once or split between several purchases. In the instance of general use gift cards, recipients also have the choice of where to use the cards. This provides an added benefit that is not found with traditional store-specific cards.

Another advantage of gift cards is that packaging is simple. The cards easily fit inside a greeting card that can be sent through the mail or hand delivered. This eliminates the need for struggling with rolls of holiday wrapping paper, spools of ribbon and that ever elusive last piece of tape.

Holiday preparations can be stressful, but gift cards can provide consumers with an easier shopping experience and recipients don't have to worry about returning the gift later. It is a win-win holiday experience for all.