

ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS ~ DON'T JUST MAKE IT THROUGH THEM!

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To enjoy the holidays, you have to think ahead. Halloween arrives and poof - before you know it - you're in the middle of Thanksgiving dinner and thinking that you haven't even started your holiday shopping! Be more prepared this year so that you can really enjoy the holidays. You can have carefree holidays! To do so depends on having the three major tasks done before all the festivities begin. These three tasks are shopping, doing the holiday photo or newsletter and wrapping all the presents. Shopping is by far the most time consuming, so you'll find some great shopping tips below.

This is like project management. Start with the deadline date and work your way backwards setting other important dates. First, decide by what date you'd like all your shopping to be done. Around the second/third week of November is a good goal. (Yes, it's coming quickly, but no worries you can start this process sooner next year.) Now, place some appointments with yourself on your calendar to do the shopping. Second, taking time into consideration, decide whether you'll write a holiday newsletter or send a photo card...by mail or electronically. Now, make two appointments on your calendar to get most of that done. Third, consider paying a local teenager an hourly rate to do all the wrapping for you. If that's not an option, schedule yourself a couple of evenings to tackle the wrapping. Be sure to turn on your favorite music and light some candles to make the most of it!

The following checklist will help you remember all the little things ahead of time. It's so easy to forget to reserve a place for the dog while you're away, or to make hair cut appointments during a stylists' busiest time.

The Ultimate Holiday Checklist

- Make holiday reservations - remember the pets.
- Making photographer reservation, if necessary.
- Take inventory of holiday wear and make shopping list.
- While present shopping, remember the boxes, tissue paper, wrapping paper, parcel paper, tape, and lots of batteries!
- Reserve tickets for special holiday events.
- If traveling by car, plan for oil change and car check.
- Make hair cut appointments.
- If traveling, get enough prescription medicines to last through January 2nd.
- Make childcare arrangements for New Year's Eve.
- Plan menu and shopping list for big holiday meals (remember champagne for the New Year).
- Order turkey or ham, if needed.
- Polish silver
- Iron tablecloths and napkins
- Place on calendar any special events for school, church, or community
- Place on calendar a night of viewing lights with cocoa and friends
- Place on calendar date to visit Santa

(continued below)

Shopping Tips

- Avoid Sundays since it is the busiest day. Saturday runs second and Friday is third.
- If you have to shop on Saturday, do it between 9:00 a.m.- Noon or 5:00 – 9:00 p.m.
- Shopping Monday – Thursday in daytime is best. (Evening is busier.)
- If you travel a lot, use the flying time to shop mail-order catalogs.
- Internet shopping at lunchtime is a real time saver, too.

Now, you are armed with an organized plan to be prepared this year, once and for all! If you use these suggestions and checklist, you're sure to enjoy the holidays!