

When you're waiting for the start of your summer vacation, 7 weeks seems like an eternity. When you're counting down to Christmas...well, that's another story. Have you been shopping all year round like you said you would after last Christmas? Did you open that Christmas Club account last January? Are you feeling really good about this year's holiday spending?

Me neither.

So do we throw in the Christmas towel and just give up? Of course not.

It's 58 days til Christmas. All of the woulda, coulda shoulda's in the world won't rewind the clock so we have more time to prepare for the upcoming spending season. So, since it is what it is, what do we do about it?

1. Make a list and check it twice. It's not just good advice for Santa but for all of us Santas at heart. Sit down and write a list of everyone you need to shop for and how much you plan on spending on everyone. Your kids, parents and close friends will be obvious, but don't forget about your boss, business associates, your child's teacher, the mail carrier, or anyone else you give a gift to this holiday season.
2. Set limits and stick to them. Determine how much money you have and are willing to spend. How much can you use from your savings and from your paychecks, and how much are you going to have to borrow? Then, set a dollar limit for everyone. Update your list every time you go shopping, and although you'll be tempted to, don't go over your limits.
3. Start NOW! If you're feeling a little nervous with 7 weeks in front of you, imagine what you'll feel like in early December if you haven't started yet. This doesn't mean that you have to go on huge shopping crusades this weekend, just keep your eyes open. A lot of stores are starting their sales now, and if you spread your shopping out over the next month or so, it'll be a lot more bearable.

Plus, giving yourself more time will reduce the risk that you'll overspend later or use your credit cards. And remember, with the new Credit CARD act of 2009, a lot of banks have been raising rates and reducing limits on credit cards, so make sure you check yours out if and when you use it.

4. There's more to holiday spending than presents. Gifts are a big part of holiday expenses, but don't forget about all of the wrapping supplies, cards and postage, baking ingredients, tree trimmings, party clothes, and everything else that adds to the joy of the season. Bankrate.com offers a great [holiday spending calculator](#) – check it out.

With a little planning and a little luck, you'll approach December 25 with a smile on your face and a few dollars still in your wallet.

Have a holiday spending tip you'd like to share? Let us know! And, be sure to watch for new blog posts on hot toys, dangers of department store credit cards, and online shopping sites to make life easier.