



10 STEPS TO A *BUDGET FRIENDLY* FESTIVE SEASON!

*Financial Ombudsman Natalie
Ceeney gives us her top tips for a
purse-friendly Christmas...*

Feature: Sarah Cohen
Image: Istockphoto.com

No matter how you're planning on spending the holiday season this year, keeping on top of your costs now can help take the sting out of the new year. And it's not just budgeting – there are lots of ways you can save money or avoid cash-related mishaps this season.

1 PRICEY PRESENTS

While many people are budgeting for Christmas this year, there may still be some high-value presents wrapped up under the tree. Check your contents insurance policy – as you might find you're not fully covered for the full value of the items if they're stolen or damaged.

2 SHOP AROUND

Look out for discounts and compare prices between shops or by looking online. If you're buying online, make sure you're happy to hand over your card details. Consider paying using a credit card as it might offer you more protection if something goes wrong with the item you're paying for – but remember to pay off your card in full, or you could end up paying more in the long run.

3 KEYS IN THE CAR

It could be a white Christmas this year. In cold weather, if you're warming up your car engine don't leave the keys in the car and the vehicle unattended. You could find you're not covered by your motor insurance policy if it gets stolen.

4 KEEP THINGS HIDDEN

If you're doing a lot of shopping for the festive period, don't leave your purchases on display in your car. Most insurance policies won't cover you for items that are stolen that are left in full view of passers by.

5 GET AWAY

Taking a holiday abroad over Christmas? Check your travel insurance policy in advance so you know what you're covered for. Keep your policy documents and contact telephone numbers to hand too, in case you need to make claim.

6 EMPTY HOME

If you're taking an extended break with friends or family this year, check with your insurer before leaving your home

'unattended'. If you're away for a long time you may not be covered for the whole period your home is empty.

7 BUY NOW, PAY LATER

Buying a large gift or using interest-free credit? Make sure you know when the deal ends, as interest rates can be high if you miss the deadline.

8 BANK HOLIDAY BLUES

Keep an eye on payment dates for bills and regular payments like direct debits and standing orders during the festive period. Bank holidays are not 'working days' so payments might be delayed or bounced if you don't have money available in your account.

9 CRUNCH THOSE CARDS

Interest rates can vary considerably on different credit cards, so check the current rate before you spend. Keep on top of what you're paying out – and if you can't clear the whole balance try to work out what you're able to pay over the minimum amount.

10 ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

A house full of people at Christmas can result in breakages and spills. Accidental damage policies are often sold as 'add-ons' to contents insurance policies to cover these mishaps. If you're not sure if you're covered, check with your insurer.



The majority of people will have a hassle-free holiday period; however, if a problem arises and you can't sort it out with a bank or insurer, the ombudsman might be able to help.

Contact: 0300 123 9 123 /

<http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk>