

The 12 tips of Christmas, the ombudsman said to me were...



It's the countdown to Christmas! As our present to you this year, we've teamed up with the Financial Ombudsman Service - the free service that helps you sort out money-related problems - to bring you our top tips to avoid a Christmas cash crisis.

12 payments bouncing

Remember that bank holidays over the festive period are not working days for banks – so direct debits and standing orders may be taken earlier than you think.

11 pipes breaking

We can't guarantee snow but it's definitely going to be a chilly, so watch out for frozen pipes. If you do find a leak or any damage, let your buildings and contents insurer know straight away.

10 payday lenders

Many people will be making it through the festive season on tight

finances this year. If you take out credit, make sure you know exactly what you're signing up to – high interest rates can easily turn a £50 debt into a £100 repayment.

9 ladies dancing

We all love a Christmas boogie but take care to shield your PIN in bars and at cash points – the festive season is a prime time for fraudsters.

8 maids a' moothing

Whether you're braving the crowds or doing it online – Christmas is a time for shopping! Looking around for the best discounts will save you some cash.

7 savers saving

It's never too early to start saving for next year. Just £10 a month could help to take the sting out of your festive food shop in 2014.

6 get repaying

If you've borrowed money under any special interest-free deals, keep a note of when the deal runs out, as repayments after this date may be expensive.

5 gold rings

If you're lucky enough to receive an expensive piece of jewellery or a gadget this Christmas make sure that you've got it covered.

4 calling banks

If you're having trouble meeting your financial obligations, facing the problem head-on can help sort things out. Contact your bank or lender straight away – they may be able to help.

3 French holidays

Whether you plan to spend your festive season on the slopes or on a beach, don't forget travel insurance. Check what the policy does – and more importantly, doesn't cover – for example a policy that doesn't cover winter sports would be no good on your skiing trip!

2 turtle doves

We often hear from consumers who have attempted to make a claim for treatment, only to find that the insurer won't cover them, so ring your insurer to ask.

AND THE OMBUDSMAN CAN HELP FOR FREE

Last year, around 3,000 people downloaded the ombudsman's complaint form on Christmas Day. So if you get stuck with a financial problem, give us a call on 0300 123 9 123 or find us on Twitter @financialombuds and we'll point you in the right direction.