

Your Money Matters **Christmas Budget Guide**

Help the Aged and Barclays have pulled together a brief guide to help with your festive finances

Christmas Budgeting

- Work out realistically how much money you have spare to spend between now and Christmas
- Then write two lists: one of everyone you have to buy Christmas presents for, and one which contains Christmas essentials, such as food, cards, stamps, wrapping paper
- Next put a realistic cost beside every item on the Christmas essentials list, add the costs up to get a total. Subtract this total from the money available to spend, and then what is left can be divided between the people on the Christmas present list and the amount for each written beside their name. If you end up with a large bill, you may be able to delete some items from the Christmas essentials list or go for cheaper alternatives to have more money available for presents
- Take the lists when going out shopping and don't be tempted to spend over the allocated amounts

Christmas Past

- Try and remember what gifts you gave and how much they cost. This year you can see if you can reduce the list and overall cost
- If you have any unwanted and unused gifts, they could make a great present for someone else as well as reduce unnecessary waste
- Dig out any unused wrapping paper and cards from last year, the designs will still be suitable for this Christmas

Christmas Present

- If money is a problem, don't be too shy to tell family and friends that you won't be buying gifts and that you don't expect to receive anything either. You could agree to buy presents only for the children, or do a Secret Santa, where everyone draws a name out of a hat and buys a present only for that person
- Remember, the money value of a gift is not related to the sentiment it expresses. You do not need to buy expensive gifts to show you care
- If you are using a credit or debit card to buy goods, always keep every receipt as it can be easy to lose track of how many times you have used the card. Check the receipts regularly and keep a record of how much you've been spending
- Where possible take advantage of the pre-Christmas offers such as buy one get one free, or buy two gifts get one free
- If you have store loyalty points saved up, why not use them to buy your own Christmas essentials or gifts for others
- Supermarkets may put up their prices on products in Christmas packaging, so between now and Christmas check prices and if you can find non-perishable goods at lower prices buy them to store away
- Use charity shops to find unique or vintage gifts

Christmas Yet to Come

- Don't wait until next December to do your Christmas shopping. You can buy gifts throughout the year. Start in January and take advantage of the New Year sales
- Many major supermarkets operate a savings scheme. Even if you only put £1 per week on it you will have over £50 by Christmas, and you are unlikely to have missed the £1 you have saved each week
- If possible try to save a little bit of money through the year. If you save even a small amount each week or month it can provide you with a reasonable sum
- Plan your budget as early as you can in the New Year, work out a rough idea of expected weekly/monthly costs as well as the Christmas costs so you know how much you'll have to spend next year