



Family Ties

Family and Consumer Science

Holiday Edition

Ten Tips for Holiday Sanity

1. Keep the holidays simple. Don't get overwhelmed by entertaining ideas in magazines and on TV shows. Get away from the idea of "perfect" holidays.
2. Keep your reason for the season in mind. Whether yours is religious or just family-centered, remind your children how important giving is and that being together should mean more than any gift they could receive.
3. Be savvy with your travel plans. Keep an eye out for the cheapest gas prices if you drive; shop the discount travel web sites if you fly or need a hotel.
4. Make gifts... sometimes. Before you decide to make holiday gifts, ask yourself if you will really save money by doing so. If you are not skilled enough to make the gifts without wasting materials or without spending excessive amounts of time, are you really saving anything?
5. Make your list of friends...then check it twice. If you still send cards or gifts to people who never respond or those you have lost contact with- scratch them from the list to save money on gifts and postage.
6. Use credit cards wisely- or not at all. Only charge the amount you can afford to pay off before interest kicks in. Do you really want to be paying for that Christmas sweater when July rolls around?
7. Clean out those closets and toy chests! Give things that don't fit to charity before adding more things to the collection.
8. Avoid using "quick fix" loans to give more extravagant gifts. Remember- household bills will continue to come in long after the holidays have ended.
9. Take advantage of free gift wrapping when it's available in malls. If the lines are too long or it is not offered- ask for gift boxes when you shop in department stores and make wrapping gifts a family affair. Save boxes throughout the year that can be used for gifts during the holidays, and save gift bags for re-use.
10. RELAX and enjoy another holiday season with family & friends!



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Celebrate National Family Week 2008

National Family Week is an annual event sponsored by the National Alliance for Children during the week of Thanksgiving. This year, National Family Week is observed November 23-29. Organizers of National Family Week believe that "Children live better lives when their families are strong, and families are strong when they live in communities that connect them to economic opportunities, social networks, and services." The idea is that we can accomplish much more when we work together than when we try to do things alone.



Everyone has a role to play in making families and communities strong. Individuals, neighborhood organizations, businesses, civic and nonprofit groups, and policymakers have vital roles in strengthening families. Some of the connections that can help make families strong include

- Economic self-sufficiency
- Dependable transportation
- Reliable, high-quality child care
- Accessible/ affordable health care
- Relevant education and training and
- Affordable housing.

As you think about ways to celebrate National Family Week consider these ideas:

- Thank someone such as a local official who has made your community better;
- Meet and get to know your neighbors;
- Plan a neighborhood supper (maybe a leftover Thanksgiving feast where everyone brings their leftovers from Thursday and shares with each other);
- While you are together, talk about ways that you can improve your community and make a plan to take action;
- Volunteer with a nonprofit organization on projects that benefit your community.

If you don't have time to do your activity during National Family Week, don't worry. You can do it at some other time. Just use this special week to think about what you want to do and spend time with your family. Then, get to work on your idea and make the whole next year a celebration of your family and community.

Happy Thanksgiving and Happy National Family Week!

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PrACTice Safety First During Holidays



More than any other time of the year, parents exert superhuman powers (beyond Santa Claus, beyond Superman or the Bionic Woman!) to ensure that the holidays are not only special but *perfect* for their children. Be it Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanza, or another cultural celebration, the winter holiday is *the* time to not only cherish spirituality and tradition, but to gift the little ones, inasmuch as is possible, with the toys and goodies of their dreams.

Well-meaning mothers and fathers peruse catalogs and the Internet, careen wildly through crowded retail outlets, and consult with overwhelmed clerks as to where to unearth the season's most coveted toys. The house is festooned with colorful décor, and decadent holiday foods abound. At its best, the holiday season is the time for families to reconnect, indulge, and enjoy.

On the other hand, the myriad details required to create the perfect holiday can be over-whelming, and, at times, safety considerations may be overlooked. **PrACTice safety first with holiday trees, toys, and treats.** Remembering the simple acronym ACT can be helpful in assuring that children enjoy safe holidays.

A - Age Appropriateness:

Holiday **trees** are beloved by adults and children alike but may pose safety threats to the little ones. Inviting glass ornaments may break; electrical cords are trip and electrocution hazards. Trees themselves may topple under investigation by curious toddlers. Be certain that trees are age appropriate for any youngsters in the house.

American **toy** manufacturers include age ranges on many of their products. While younger children may clamor for toys marketed to older kids, bear in mind the relative sophistication of the toy *and* the child. Younger children may not be safe playing with battery or electric-powered toys. Remember, as well, the packaging. Toddlers love to play with boxes and plastic bags; asphyxiation dangers are possible.

C - Choking Hazard:

Old-fashioned **trees** are charming; strings of popcorn and candy canes look lovely against their green backdrop, but they can also attract young palates. Be certain that children do not choke on any tree decorations. Icicles are an intriguing, glittery item that some little ones may attempt to consume.

Toys often feature small, detachable parts that can find their way into a baby or toddler's windpipe. It is important to not only monitor the little one's toys but to ensure, as well, that they cannot access their older sibling's items and encounter choking hazards.

Many holiday **treats** can lodge in the throats of young children. Beware of hard candies, nuts, and other edibles that little ones cannot chew efficiently. Even nutritious snacks from the crudité's tray can be dangerous. Broccoli and cauliflower florets and baby carrots are examples of some items to consider.

T - Toxicity:

All that glitters . . . *could* be dangerous Be aware of lead and other toxins in the home.

Christmas **trees** and their finery are responsible for several lead poisoning concerns. PVC is used as an insulating agent in some artificial trees, as well as many Christmas tree lights. Lead is contained within the PVC and also used as a fire retardant. Aging artificial trees may shed lead dust. Contact contamination may occur in handling Christmas lights. Older tree ornaments may be coated with lead paint that can chip. For safety's sake, do not use an artificial tree that contains lead; contact the manufacturer if there is any doubt. Lights should be handled by adults only, who should be certain to thoroughly cleanse their hands afterwards. Vintage ornaments are best displayed out of reach of children.



Some holiday greenery also carries a risk of poisoning. The berries of holly and mistletoe, attractive to young children, can cause illness and even death if consumed. Enjoy these seasonal favorites out of reach of small fingers— and mouths.

Likewise, lead paint continues to be a concern in some **toys**, particularly those manufactured in foreign countries. Consult labels to check for lead content. The CDC maintains an excellent site chronicling items recalled for lead content. The URL for this page is www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/Recalls/.

In the past year, toys, play jewelry, and kiddy cosmetics have all been targeted for product recalls.

Finally, be careful to serve holiday **treats** on safe dinnerware. Avoid lead crystal, as lead may leach into food or beverages. Some decorative ceramic and porcelain ware may also contain lead in the glazing or paints. These bowls and platters should be used for display purposes only and never as serving pieces.

ACT always to safeguard the most precious of human resources – children. May the holidays be a safe and peaceful time of rejoicing and renewal.

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Teens and Holiday Traditions



Even though teens may seem to be preoccupation with best friends, boyfriends, and girlfriends most of the year, when it comes to holidays, teens usually revert by to “family”. In fact, comforting traditions and rituals often become more important as children head through adolescence and toward independence.

Christmas memories lure teens back to the days of innocence and wonderment -- and family. While it's sometimes necessary to change certain aspects of family traditions as children grow, most teens get a warm sense of belonging from the familiar rituals of their youth. During the rest of the year, they may scorn many things as "babyish" or prefer partying with friends, but according to research, teens say home with the family is what's important this time of year.

Teens Discuss Holiday Rituals

Below are some individual stories from teens reflecting on their family traditions and togetherness during the holidays:

□ Allison age 16 writes. . . “Several weeks before Christmas, my whole family goes together to the shopping mall where they have this huge Christmas tree with hundreds of tags with names of kids from a local charity hanging on the branches. Each tag has the name of a child, his or her clothes size, and a list of gifts he or she wants for Christmas.”

"We each grab two tags and always make sure to get the names of older kids -- you know teenagers -- everyone seems to grab the little kids' tags first. Then we go shopping, buy them stuff, wrap them, and bring the packages back to the tree. It's a cool feeling to know we're helping someone have a good Christmas, even if we never see these kids."

□ Andy age 15 tells how his family celebrates Hanukkah and Christmas. The family has traditions with both his father and mother's relatives. "We all get together at my dad's sister's house on the first night of Hanukkah and have latkes and light candles and get our gifts," says Andy

“On Christmas Eve, we go to my mom's parents' farm and finish decorating the tree and then help frost cookies. When we wake up in the morning we open all our presents. All my cousins come from around the state and it's so much fun. I can't wait until I have kids and we do that."

□ Nicole age 17 talks about how her family would drive 40 miles from their rural Tennessee town into downtown Nashville to look at the holiday lights and displays. This has been a tradition that Nicole's family has done with two other families since she was a little girl. "This year my boyfriend came along with my family. I'd never go without them -- that's what the holidays are all about!"

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Handling Finances as a Couple

One of the most common reasons couples give for splitting up is disagreements about money and having financial problems. Given the current economic situation, it is likely that financial problems are going to get worse for families before they get better. This may lead to an increase in separation or divorce for many couples. Unfortunately, separation or divorce usually creates more financial problems for both parties. What can couples do to deal with their current financial problems or to avoid future problems?

The first step is to talk about your finances. Couples seldom discuss the topic of money before marriage; it just isn't romantic to talk about income and debts. But, talking about money, openly and honestly is the best way to avoid future problems.

The second step is to recognize your own values and attitudes about money. Values are what you consider to be important. Your personal attitudes toward money are highly influenced by your value system. For example, one person may value spending money while the other might value saving it. That's a built-in conflict but not the only one that can affect a relationship. Couples whose members share the same values can still have disagreements. Two savers could have a major disagreement on how to invest money. Two spenders could run out of money before the end of the month.

Your values most often come from the way your own family handled money. In some families, the mother was the bookkeeper and check writer, while in another family the father took the responsibility. Some people were raised in a family where nothing was paid on time and bill collectors called on a regular basis. All of these childhood experiences affect money habits. The key is to learn about each other's experiences and try to blend your styles for handling money.

Money can become an emotional weapon when a couple is going through a difficult time. For example, if one spouse is angry at the other, a spending spree may be a way to get even or ease hurt feelings. The result is an increase in debt. If a couple has an argument, an expensive gift might be offered as an apology, but it will add to the family debt. What needs to happen in these situations is a

heart-to-heart talk and not a major purchase or spending spree. Money should not be used as a way to get even or apologize.

You need to decide as a couple how you want to handle money. Whether you have one or two incomes, you need to discuss your options and come up with a plan. Here are some suggestions for devising a plan for dealing with money:



- Make a habit of talking with your partner about money and work on a spending plan together;
- Never hide debt; it creates a tremendous amount of stress for everyone;
- Agree on financial goals. It takes compromising on some issues, but it's all part of having a strong relationship;
- Establish a spending plan to direct where your money will go;
- Set up a household record-keeping system;
- Look at your finances with your partner each month to determine how you're doing financially;
- Make adjustments in your spending plan if it is not working;.
- Build an emergency savings account for unexpected expenses;
- Use purchasing practices that reduce spending and redirect money into savings (for example, buy items in bulk to reduce total cost or use coupons to save on groceries and household items so that savings can be used for a family vacation or other goal);
- Get into the habit of paying for items with cash instead of credit;
- Keep your total consumer debt to 20% of your take home pay (consumer debt is car payments, credit card payments, etc.);
- Learn about income taxes. You may find it to your advantage to file a joint tax return and itemize deductions.

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Holiday Cheer on a Tight Budget

With our economy in turmoil and everything increasing it seems, but our incomes, it appears that it is going to be a lean holiday season for many of us. The hardest part of being the adults in charge of both the holiday festivities and ensuring the monthly bills are paid on time is most often reported as the stress of trying to accomplish it all. We try to start with a plan and a budget-but how do we stick to it in times such as these?



To answer this we must remember that in every problem lurks opportunity. We can look at our financial situation as an opportunity to reestablish family traditions that are not necessarily centered on gift giving alone. Take a quiet moment to reflect with paper and pencil. What do you remember as the best part of the holidays? Are your fondest memories centered on being together for a meal or an evening of games and festivities? What sights, sounds, smells, and tastes bring back your childhood and the magic of the season for you? What do you want your children to remember fondly about their childhood holidays with you? Jot down your answers and then look at what you realistically can afford for the holidays and write that number down by your answers to what is important. And, most importantly, don't despair-no matter what number you list-there is a way to stay within that budget.

The following tips are just ideas to help you think of ways you can stick to your budget and have a wonderful holiday season. Contact extended family ahead of time and negotiate/plan your events with gift giving parameters in mind. Whatever works for everyone is the right answer.

Here are some suggestions for discussion:

- ❁ No gifts this year just enjoy one another's company with planned games and a meal.
- ❁ One gift per family (i.e. family night box with hot chocolate, board game or puzzle, movie, etc.)
- ❁ Give gifts for children only or set a price limit and draw names so that everyone gets a gift. Again-remember your budget and what works for everyone is the right answer!
- ❁ When considering gifts for your children you can have a family meeting and discuss what rules you would like to establish. You could choose to tell them that this year Santa is bringing only one gift for everyone because it is a special surprise that everyone can enjoy together.
- ❁ Stuff stockings with small less expensive and personalized gifts including toothbrushes, lip gloss or chapstick, gloves, fruit and nuts, socks, underwear, nail polish, sewing notions, tools, first aid items, jams/preserves, snack items, journals, school supplies, note cards/stationary, etc.
- ❁ Consider shopping within the budget with only cash. If you have to use a debit/credit card consider buying a prepaid card that matches your budget so that you are not tempted to overspend.
- ❁ Instead of buying gifts consider "heart gifts" or gifts you can make. You can bake cookies or breads in bulk and package them in festive cellophane goody bags or small tins to distribute to teachers, church members, family and friends.

✿ Instead of buying expensive wrapping paper, bags, and bows at individual prices consider using butcher block paper or brown paper bags for wrapping or bagging your gift items and allow your children to decorate them.

✿ Instead of exchanging gifts you could allow your children to pick a charity or family in need. Allow the children to plan how they will help and follow through with their plan as a family project. Teaching your children to give to others is the best gift they will ever receive.

✿ Make applesauce ornaments to attach to gifts or decorate the tree. Have apple cider in a crockpot to make the house smell festive and comfort cold family members as they come in from school or work.

Remember after all is said and done and the holidays have come and gone again what matters most are not things. It isn't usually the gifts we receive that we remember as much as the love that was felt and the family that was gathered around. May your holiday season be full of joy and love.

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Apple Cider Recipe

1 gallon pasteurized apple cider or apple juice
1 orange, washed and dried
1 tsp. whole cloves
½ tsp. nutmeg
3 sticks cinnamon

In a slow cooker pour apple cider/juice and add cinnamon sticks, nutmeg, and cloves. Cut orange into fourths and add to cider mixture. Plug in slow cooker and turn on high setting for one hour and then turn down to low setting and simmer.

*Unpasteurized cider or apple juice can contain bacteria. If you can only find unpasteurized cider or juice it is important to bring the liquid to a boil to kill all bacteria present prior to consuming.

Apple-Sauce Ornaments

1 cup ground cinnamon
¾ cup applesauce
¼ cup white glue



Mix all ingredients well until they form dough. Flatten the dough to a thickness of about ¼ inch. Keep in mind that the dough will be quite dry, and can be tricky to work with.

Use cookie cutters to cut out festive holiday shapes. Use a drinking straw to punch a small hole in the top of each ornament if you plan to hang them. Keep them flat and move them to a warm dry spot for 48 hours to allow them to dry. Turn each ornament over every few hours to dry on each side. Alternatively, put them in a warm (not hot!) oven for 2-3 hours.

Wee, for the Wii!



The Wii craze has many kids, families, and professionals talking. Could this be the answer to childhood obesity? Many experts are asking that very question. Wii gaming systems are being used in homes by the traditional video game junkie - kids, but also by their parents and even public service entities. Most youth are anxious to try any new game put out on the market, so their interest have pushed sales the past two holiday seasons. "Exergaming, and exertainment, is an excellent way for getting kids hooked on physical activity, producing good exercise habits that can last their lifetime," reports Dr. Josh Trout, Professor of Kinesiology at California State University Chico.

New audiences are taking interest in this new game system. Adults are letting their curiosity bring out their youthful urge to play the Wii system. What a great avenue for families to take to spend time together! Professionals such as teachers, youth service workers, doctors, and physical therapists are even finding this new gaming system useful. Wii's are being used globally as tools for rehabilitation and physical activity. Physical therapists that have experience using the Wii with rehabilitation patients say that the patient is so engaged in the games that "while doing range of motion, coordination, strengthening and stretching exercises using Wii," they are unaware of the energy that the game demands and "they have fun while doing strenuous and often boring exercises."

The idea of this being the answer to childhood obesity sits on the minds of many. A website called the Science Daily reported that because video games seem to be the most popular form of entertainment among youth, "Children burn more than four times as many calories per minute playing an active video game than playing a seated game, and their heart rate is also significantly higher with the active game." Nichole Snow, an ISSA Certified Personal Trainer and avid gamer said, "The Nintendo Wii will show benefits for everyone. Whether you can sit down for the game or you have to be standing, it involves movement. The best part is, it's just fun - for everyone. Deconditioned and obese individuals will find it fun to play and gain aerobic movement out of the games. Seniors can enjoy gentle movements of bowling and golfing. Youth become a part of the game and don't just turn into vegetables in front of the TV." Gareth Stratton, a co-author of the study and a reader in pediatric exercise science at Liverpool John Moores University reports that Wii gaming does require more energy than sedentary gaming. The Wii is certainly an excellent tool for individuals to be physically active. Although it cannot replace a cardiovascular work out that the human body needs to fulfill a healthy lifestyle, it is a great start. Some of the types of games that are available for the Wii system are cooking, bowling, tennis, golf, and guitar playing - something for everyone!

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Tune In to Financial Lingo

Turn on the local news, open the newspaper, or tune into the radio--chances are you will be bombarded with financial terms you may or may not fully understand. While the definitions below will not make you a financial expert, they may help you to make more sense of today's news.

Investment Terms

Securities – This word refers to publicly traded stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and other financial investments. You can find lists of current values of many types of securities in most major newspapers and on the Internet.

Bonds – A bond is a loan in the form of a security. When you invest in a bond, you are loaning the issuer of the bond your money in return for a fixed rate of interest over a specific amount of time. Examples include savings bonds, corporate bonds, and municipal bonds.

Stocks – Stocks are shares of a company offered to the public for purchase. When you buy common stocks you are buying part ownership in the company. Stocks are often called equities.

Stock Market – The stock market includes all trading of public and private stock. It is one of the most important sources for a company to raise money for expansion.

Stock Exchange – An organization that provides trading facilities--physical or electronic--for the regulated exchange of stocks and securities. The three major public Stock Exchanges in the US are the New York Stock Exchange, the American Stock Exchange, and the NASDAQ. The NASDAQ is an electronic exchange while the New York Stock Exchange and American Stock Exchange have actual trading floors.

Dow – Officially known as the Dow Jones Industrial Average Index, the Dow is the most commonly quoted measure of how the stock market is performing. The Dow tracks the movement of 30 of the largest stocks traded on the New York Stock Exchange. Locally known companies that are part of the Dow include: Coca-Cola, Caterpillar, ALCOA, Wal-Mart, McDonalds and Citigroup.

NASDAQ – This stock market index tracks the movement of all companies traded on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange. Types of stocks in the NASDAQ Index include technology and communications and retail and wholesale trade. The NASDAQ does not contain financial or investment companies.

Commodities – Commodities are physical substances such as food, grains, oil or metals that investors buy and sell usually through futures contracts. If the future supply of a product is expected to be higher than demand, the futures price will be low, but if demand for the product is expected to exceed supply, futures prices will be high.

Futures – Financial contracts obligating the buyer to purchase commodities or other asset at a future date and pre-determined price. The buyer’s profit is dependent on being able to actually sell the commodity or asset at a higher price than the one pre-determined by the futures contract.

Mortgage-Backed Securities – Mortgage-Backed Securities are investments backed by mortgage loans. After a financial institution (bank, credit union or mortgage company) issues a mortgage to a homeowner, the loan may be sold along with hundreds of others to an organization that combines the loans and sells them as MBSs. As the mortgage loans are paid off by homeowners investors receive payment of principle and interest on the securities.



Derivative – Derivatives are contracts bought and sold at prices based on the current or future value of an underlying asset. For example, a futures derivative might be based on the expected price of an underlying asset such as an agricultural commodity, a precious metal or a Mortgage-Backed Security.

Short Selling – Practiced by experienced investors, short selling involves considerable risk. An investor will borrow the shares of a company from someone who owns them with the promise to return them later. The investor immediately goes out and sells the borrowed shares at the current market price, which the investor believes is inflated. If the investor’s hunch is right and the prices of the shares plunge, the investor then buys the same number of shares (at the much lower price) and returns the shares to the person from whom they were borrowed. The profit the investor hopes to make is the difference between the sell of the stock at its inflated price and the purchase of the shares after the price has dropped.

An Economic Review

The Economy – Economic transactions among consumers, businesses and governments make up “the economy.” In the U.S., growth or shrinkage of the economy is most commonly measured by the Gross Domestic Product or GDP. The GDP is the estimated value of everything that’s produced within the borders of the U.S.

Recession – In general terms, a recession is a prolonged period of time--6 to 9 months--when a nation’s production/consumption is slowing down. More specifically, a recession is indicated by 6 to 9 months of a falling GDP.

Depression – The distinction between a recession and depression is not clearly defined by economists, but generally, a depression can be thought of as a severe or prolonged recession.

Inflation – Inflation is a rise in the overall prices of goods and services. The Consumer Price Index is a measure of inflation.

Keynesian Economics – This economic approach argues that during economic downturns governments should encourage overall *demand* for goods and services. This might be done by reducing interest rates and government spending to increase employment.



Supply-Side Economics – This economic approach argues that economic growth can be most effectively created by providing incentives such as lower income and capital gains taxes for companies to produce (*supply*) goods and services. Supply-Side Economics has also been called “Trickle-Down Economics.”

Liquidity – Liquidity usually refers to how quickly an asset can be turned into cash, but in the current media, liquidity is often used to refer to how easily money can be borrowed.

Agencies in the News

Department of the Treasury - The Department of Treasury is a cabinet department established to manage government revenue. The department prints and mints all paper currency and coins in circulation. The Department also collects all federal taxes through the IRS. The recent Economic Stabilization Act gave new powers to the Treasury Department to use government revenue to shore up the financial sector of the business economy.

The Fed – The Federal Reserve System is the central banking system of the United States. The Federal Reserve influence monetary policy by trying to affect the amount of money in circulation and the level of interest rates.

Fed Funds Rate - The Fed Funds rate is the interest rate at which financial institutions lend money to other institutions usually overnight. The Federal Reserve can use this rate to regulate the flow of money in the United States.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac – The Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA or Fannie Mae) was founded as part of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. Its original purpose was to guarantee government-issued mortgages. In 1968, when Fannie Mae was converted to a private shareholder-owned corporation, its primary function became purchasing home mortgages on the secondary market and converting them to securities for sale to investors. In order to provide competition for mortgage securities in the open market, the government also created, in 1970, the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (FHLMA or Freddie Mac). Together, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac owned or guaranteed about half of the U.S. mortgage market. In September of 2008, when it became apparent that neither organization was solvent, both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were placed into the conservatorship of the U.S. Federal Housing Finance Agency.



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