

READY, SET, GO!



Lisa and Janya Spencer show their shopping success on Black Friday at the Macomb Mall in Roseville in 2023. **JAMESON COOK — MEDIANEWS GROUP**

Timing is everything to leverage holiday sales for household necessities

By **Kimberly Palmer**
NERDWALLET

This fall, multiple appliances in my home let me know they were done. A water line inside my washer broke, my dryer began requiring multiple cycles to dry a load, and my hair straightener stopped getting hot enough to do its job.

The only silver lining? Solid holiday sales get really good in November.

As a personal finance expert, I came up with a shopping strategy: I would select the appliances I wanted to buy before sales began, track the prices through Black Friday and buy as soon as those prices dipped to their lowest point.

I estimate that leveraging holiday sales to buy my household necessities could save me several hundred dollars.

Samantha Gordon, the deals editor at Consumer Reports, confirmed the logic of my

strategy.

“My biggest piece of advice for anybody is to never buy anything not on sale,” she says. And in November, she adds, “Everything goes on sale.”

With some planning, you can leverage the season’s discounts for your own needs.

Make your list early

Research exactly which products you want before the sales start so you can make an informed decision when the discounts begin, Gordon says.

She suggests tracking prices now so you know what constitutes an actual discount versus simply an advertised sale.

“You want to know what the price is on an average day,” Gordon says, adding that price-tracking tools, such as Keepa, CamelCamelCamel.com and PayPal Honey, can help you.

Andrea Woroch, a money-saving expert who shares budgeting tips on her website, has been doing just that. Like me, she has a list of household products — including a vacuum and new fridge — that she hopes to buy during the holiday sales.

“Set a sale alert for an item you want to track so you don’t miss a limited-time, early deal,” she suggests.

If you plan to shop at a specific store, Woroch says to sign up for free loyalty programs. That may get you free shipping, rewards for purchases and extra coupons.

Consider everyday household items

Big-ticket items aren’t the only things marked down this time of year. Everyday essentials, such as paper products and makeup, also go on sale.

Avoid frenzied buying

Of course, all these discounts can also translate into wayward buys.

While it can be a good idea to buy a discounted item for next year now, Woroch cautions against overspending.

“Just make sure you can afford the purchase when you buy it. You don’t want to add to your spending load so much that you can’t pay off your card,” she says, because that can lead to interest charges.

In some cases, 0% financing deals may also be available during sales events, allowing you to spread out payments without interest accruing, she adds.

Lock in seasonal savings

October’s prices were good, but I’m holding out for Black Friday sales: The hair appliance I plan to purchase — a Beachwaver rotating

curling iron — normally retails for \$99, but dipped to just under \$70 right before the October sales hit.

I was tempted to hit “buy” until I checked the price history on CamelCamelCamel.com. I saw that last Black Friday, the price went all the way down to \$49. So I’m waiting, hoping the low price repeats itself again this year. If it does, I’ll save about \$50.

For our washer and dryer combo, I selected the LG ThinQ model after combing through online reviews. While it’s currently marked down about \$500, I expect an even better deal during the Black Friday sales.

Research shows that appliance prices typically dip during Black Friday. So I’m keeping my eye out and will make my purchase when I see sales roll out. It’s a bit of a gamble — because I could save \$500 now — but I’m hopeful.

The bottom line? Using seasonal sales to buy necessities can save you cash, which we can all use right now.



Shoppers push a television to their car after shopping during a Black Friday sale at a Best Buy store in 2021. **ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO**



A man waits to check out as he shops a Black Friday sale at a Best Buy store in 2017. **ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO**

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GOBBLE, GOBBLE

Love walking?

Sign up for a turkey trot, the biggest race of the year

By Gretchen Reynolds
THE WASHINGTON POST

On the biggest running day of the year, you and everyone you know are welcome to come out and walk, perhaps while wearing a tutu, juggling, making gobbling noises or strolling with your favorite 5-year-old — or doing all of the above.

Because on Thanksgiving Day, more people in the United States will gather to run together than during any other single day, thanks to the phenomenon known as the turkey trot (or sometimes, the gobble wobble or drumstick dash). Almost always 5-kilometer races, covering 3.1 miles, and taking place on Thanksgiving, turkey trots attracted more than 1.1 million people last year, according to participation statistics.

A popular one in Michigan is the S3 Turkey Trot, which draws thousands of participants and has been a tradition in Detroit for over 40 years. Often declared “The Parade before The Parade,” participants take to the streets ahead of America’s Thanksgiving Parade down Woodward Avenue.

The word “runners,” in this context, is a misnomer. “Quite a few people walk the entire way,” said Allison Humbert Wilkinson, the associate marketing director for Life Time, a health club company that puts on the annual Life Time Turkey Trot Chicago, one of the largest races in the country.

Turkey trots “are very inclusive,” Wilkinson continued. They “welcome anyone,” whatever your race experience, speed or lack of either.

Which makes turkey trots a great entry point to racing, running — if you choose to run — or just being outside and moving on a brisk, autumn morning with hundreds or thousands of your fellow revelers, many of them in costumes.

With that in mind, we decided to create a beginner’s guide to the turkey trot. We hope you’ll get inspiration because turkey trots may be the purest essence of exercise as pleasure, as

community, as empowerment and as fun. With tutus optional.

You’ve got a year to plan your grand entrance to the tradition.

WHAT IS A TURKEY TROT?

Traditionally, a turkey trot is a 5-kilometer race taking place on Thanksgiving morning. Some events also include a 1-mile or 1-kilometer kids race or occasionally a 13.1-mile half-marathon or other distance. But most are 5Ks.

They also may be the least-daunting mass-participation sporting event most of us will ever enter, with a goofy, all-comers’ attitude. “If you’re new to turkey trots and want to get in the spirit of the thing,” said Dimity McDowell, the chief training director and co-founder of Another Mother Runner, a website and group for runners, “wear a costume.” It’s that kind of race.

As for what type of costume, tutus predominate, for reasons that are lost to the mists of time. But there are many other sartorial options. “People wear Thanksgiving hats, socks, shirts, feathers, all kinds of things,” Wilkinson said. (I was once nipped at the finish line by a man wearing a full-body, inflatable turkey suit.)

Turkey trots also tend to be surprisingly multigenerational. “We get parents, kids, teenagers, grandparents, all out there together,” Wilkinson said.

Many, if not most, of these participants walk the entire distance. “Some people might be surprised at the number of walkers,” McDowell said. “It’s definitely not an intimidating environment.”

HOW TO TRAIN FOR A TURKEY TROT

But it is a 5K, which takes some preparation. “Three miles is a nice distance,” said McDowell, a certified running coach. “It’s doable for a lot of people. But it’s not insignificant.”

If you haven’t been walking regularly, start there, she said. Try to walk for at least 30 minutes three or



Sisters Luz Duran, left, and Teresa Francisco, spread the wings of their costumes before joining other runners in taking part in the 49th annual Mile High United Way Turkey Trot on Nov. 24, 2022, in southeast Denver. **DAVID ZALUBOWSKI — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

four times a week. Aim for a pace of at least 20 minutes per mile, meaning you would finish the turkey trot in a little more than an hour.

Already walking? “Start throwing in a few little runs,” McDowell said. Pick a landmark a block or so ahead and gently jog to it, then slow back to a walk, before choosing another landmark and jogging some more. This method of impromptu moving, fast and slow, is often called fartlek training. (You can find more training tips and programs at another-motherrunner.com.)

Or consider “Jeffing,” a more structured way to mix walking and running. Named for its originator, the long-time coach Jeff Galloway, this method has been used since the 1970s by countless racers to train for almost every distance, from 5Ks to marathons.

“The secret is to find your ideal ratio” of running and walking, Galloway said. Now 80, he’s training to become the first person ever to run a marathon in eight decades of life, he said, having completed his first one when he was 18. He still trains by Jeffing and often introduces the technique to new runners.

“For beginners, people who’ve been mostly sedentary,” he said, “I’d suggest running for about five seconds and then walking for about 30 to 60 seconds.” Repeat that sequence as many times as you can, he said.

Once this entry-level Jeffing feels easy, stretch out the length of your running segments to 10 seconds, then 15, 45, 60 or more. “The important thing is to monitor huffing and puffing,” Galloway said. “If you’re starting to huff and puff, take a short

reset break of walking, and then find a more gentle run-walk-run rhythm that feels manageable to you.” His company offers a free app that provides detailed training programs for 5Ks and other distances (jeffgalloway.com).

HOW TO REGISTER FOR A TURKEY TROT

Ready to register? You can find your nearest turkey trot at findarace.com. More than 1,300 races are planned this year, in communities large and small, with many functioning as fundraisers for local charities.

Once registered, plan to pick up your race packet the day before the event, Wilkinson said, relieving race-morning pressure. (You can usually sign up the day of the race, but it tends to cost a little more, and you have to come earlier to register in person.)

A race packet typically includes your T-shirt and bib, which shows your race number, as well as safety pins. Use them to attach your bib to the front of whatever shirt you’ll wear in the race, Wilkinson said. Don’t pin your number to a jacket, in case you remove it.

Race morning, arrive at least an hour or more before the start, McDowell said, so you can park, use the bathroom and warm up a bit. You shouldn’t need to carry water or food, since there will usually be at least one aid station along the route.

Then find your starting spot. Some races set up what are known as corrals, with signs or other markers showing where people of different speeds should gather. Look for one that matches your expectations. If you’re a beginner and honest, that would probably be 15- or



It’s a family affair for this team at the 2024 Chicago Turkey Trot. **COURTESY LIFE TIME**

20-minute miles.

If there aren’t corrals — or even if there are — “head for the back” of the race field, McDowell said. “That’s where the party is.” Back-of-the-pack racers trade names, stories, recipes and encouragement. They also rarely jostle one another or jump out at high speeds, McDowell said, which often happens closer to the front.

Once the race starts, hold back and walk, Galloway said. Let the speedsters sprint away. “Walking breaks at the start are the most important” to avoid fatigue, he said. Walk for the first mile, and if you still feel

fresh at that point, speed up then.

Above all, enjoy yourself, McDowell said. “These races are special because they’re about so much more than just running.” They’re about family, friends and community, she said, about the people you’re with and those who couldn’t be there.

“Turkey trots become traditions,” she said. “One year you run it with one or two other people, then the next year it’s three or four, and then five or six. It’s a wonderful way to remember what you’re really most thankful for.”



Staying warm in their favorite costumes, racers take off for the 2024 Chicago Turkey Trot. **COURTESY LIFE TIME**

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SHOPPING LOCAL

‘From Michigan With Love’ releases 2025 holiday food and gift guide

By Franklin Dohanyos
FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

This year’s guide has something for everyone, including some new products and some favorites from over the years.

I’ve had the pleasure of working with delightful business owners from Marquette to Monroe, from coast to coast, and many points in between. As per figures from a couple of years ago, if every Michigan household replaced \$45 each month on Michigan products, approximately \$2 billion would be pumped into Michigan’s economy. That has the potential to create 12,000 jobs.

Here’s this year’s list:

DETROIT CAN CO.

Livonia
detroitcancompany.com

Detroit Can Co. in Livonia started in 2021 and creates stylish “gift cans” containing delicious treats from metropolitan Detroit and other parts of Michigan. The colorful cans, which come in three different sizes, are sealed in a decorative wrap. The cans can be personalized with the items you want. This “ready to go” gift can be reused for other purposes when empty. These collectable cans make a perfect gift for family, friends, and colleagues, and for many occasions such as birthdays, holidays, thank you gifts, etc. The company can also help with fundraising and raffles.

SAFFRON AND SALT

Royal Oak
saffronandsalt.com

Saffron and Salt was created in Royal Oak in 2023 by Ashley Alexander. Ashley learned at an early age the love of canning from her grandmother, who would can things to sell at her roadside stand. Saffron and Salt offers delicious products such as Candied Jalapeños — a little sweet, a little hot — great on sandwiches, tacos, and more; Firecracker Carrots — Sweet, earthy flavor of fresh carrots pickled with an extra spark of heat; and Sweet Burn Bread & Butter Pickles — Crisp, salty, sour, sweet, and just spicy enough. All offerings are made fresh with real ingredients that you can pronounce and with zero preservatives. They are great by themselves or as a garnish, in dips, on hamburgers and sandwiches — anything you can think of. Great tasting with a bit of heat. They’re perfect for game day and for holiday gatherings.

JOANN’S FUDGE

Mackinac Island
joannsfudge.com

Joann’s Fudge was opened in 1969 by Frank and Joann Nephew and is still family-owned and operated. Joann’s Fudge has two stores on Mackinac Island and one in Mackinaw City. Joann’s offers 28 fudge flavors, including some unique flavors like Raspberry Truffle, Orange Truffle, Vanilla Salted Caramel, Chocolate Toffee, Double Dark Cherry Walnut, and just in time for the holidays, Pumpkin Pie. The company makes delicious peanut and cashew brittle, as well as “The Ultimate Brittle,” which has a variety of nuts. It was Frank’s favorite, and after he died, the family decided to add it to its year-round products. Also, Joann’s caramel corn, cheese corn, and caramel apples are the best on the island. Plus chocolate clusters, chocolate turtles, English toffee, large peanut butter cups and chocolate barks.

STICKY BE SOCKS

Roseville
stickybesocks.com

Sticky Be Socks is a female-owned and operated business located in Roseville. The company makes stylish, warm grip socks that are crafted



Detroit Can Co. PHOTO COURTESY OF FROM MICHIGAN WITH LOVE



Better Made Snack Foods. PHOTO COURTESY OF FROM MICHIGAN WITH LOVE



Dearborn Brand. PHOTO COURTESY OF WILSON SARKIS



Pinconning Cheese Co. PHOTO COURTESY OF FROM MICHIGAN WITH LOVE



Great Lakes Pot Pies. PHOTO COURTESY OF FROM MICHIGAN WITH LOVE

from high-quality materials and are made to keep the wearer safe on their feet. There are socks for people of all ages — toddlers, kids, grown-ups, and especially for seniors. They’re great for

the gym, hospital stays, on wooden and tile floors, and wherever, for better balance. Sticky Be Socks donates a combined 20% of its proceeds to the Pink Fund and the Fondle project.



Saffron and Salt. PHOTO COURTESY OF FROM MICHIGAN WITH LOVE



Joann's Fudge . PHOTO COURTESY OF FROM MICHIGAN WITH LOVE



Sticky Be Socks. PHOTO COURTESY OF FROM MICHIGAN WITH LOVE



Holland Bowl Mill. PHOTO COURTESY OF ASHLEY AVILA PHOTOGRAPHY

HOLLAND BOWL MILL

Holland
hollandbowlmill.com

Holland Bowl Mill creates the finest heirloom

wooden bowls, utensils, cutting boards and household decorations you will ever find, made from exotic woods — mainly from Michigan! One of the hot offerings this year is the

Michigan-shaped wooden bowl. The company started out as the Holland Wooden Shoe Factory in 1926 and then began turning hand-crafted bowls from exotic woods. The Holland Bowl Mill recently expanded and updated its customer showroom to highlight a bigger selection of bowls and more of the products it offers. The company still gives tours to anyone at any hour of the working day. Each bowl or product is hand-made, hand-polished with bees’ oil, and can be engraved for free on the bottom. It is the best and largest solid wood bowl production facility in the world and was featured on the Discovery Channel’s program “How It’s Made.”

PINCONNING CHEESE CO.

Pinconning
pinconningcheese.com

Pinconning Cheese Co. celebrated its 77th anniversary this year. The store has over 150 varieties of cheeses, plus many different flavors of cheese spreads. The most popular is Squeaky Mild Pinconning, and the most exotic is a 16-year-old super sharp Pinconning Cheese. Pinconning Cheese creator Dan Horn began producing the now-famous Pinconning Cheese in 1915. Over the years, Pinconning Cheese Co. has been marketed as a destination to travelers headed north. The company also offers beautiful gift boxes.

GREAT LAKES POT PIES

Clawson
greatlakespotpies.com

Great Lakes Pot Pies offers hand-made pot pies in a 9-inch and a 5-inch size in a variety of flavors, including chicken, beef stew, pasty, and a new “Thanksgiving in a Pie.” There are hand pies in a variety of flavors, including breakfast and dessert, like chocolate chip and pecan pie, and gluten-free and vegan offerings. All pies are hand-made with fresh ingredients locally sourced in Michigan as much as possible, and with no preservatives. Great Lakes Pot Pies makes a snack called “Pie Chips,” which are made from piecrust flavored with cinnamon sugar pie on top.

DEARBORN BRAND

Dearborn
dearbornbrand.com

A family tradition since 1946, Dearborn Brand specializes in only the best hams and sausages that are perfect for holiday meals. All sausages are made fresh with only the best cuts of meat. The company also has a plethora of snack foods, like jerky in various flavors and sausage sticks in various flavors. Everything is perfect for snacking during the games and for school/work lunches. Dearborn also produces Virginia Brand products and Farmer Peet’s products, including the much-loved Pickle Bologna. The company’s products are available in stores across Michigan and at the company’s retail stores in Dearborn and Roseville.

BETTER MADE SNACK FOODS

Detroit
bettermade.com

Now in its 95th year, Better Made continues to be Michigan’s favorite potato chip and snack food maker. The company is still family-owned and still supports Detroit and charitable organizations in Michigan. Better Made’s famous chocolate-covered chips are back and available in milk or dark chocolate. Better Made also offers a handy 18-count Variety Pack, a 10-count original and BBQ multipack, and one of my favorites, the Better Made Detroit Mix, a delicious bag of caramel and cheese popcorn that I can’t stop eating. Try Better Made’s new Kettle Chips in three delicious flavors.

MAKE YOUR LISTS

Tips to master Black Friday and Cyber Monday shopping

By Metro Editorial Services

Black Friday is one of the busiest and most profitable shopping days of the entire year.

According to Demand-Sage and National Public Radio, American consumers spent a record \$10.8 billion on online Black Friday shopping in 2024. Around \$61 billion in total sales (both online and in-person) were made over the Black Friday and Cyber Monday weekend.

Consumers can land great deals on the day after Thanksgiving, which means individuals who hone their Black Friday shopping skills can reap considerable rewards.

The following tips can help shoppers master Black Friday:

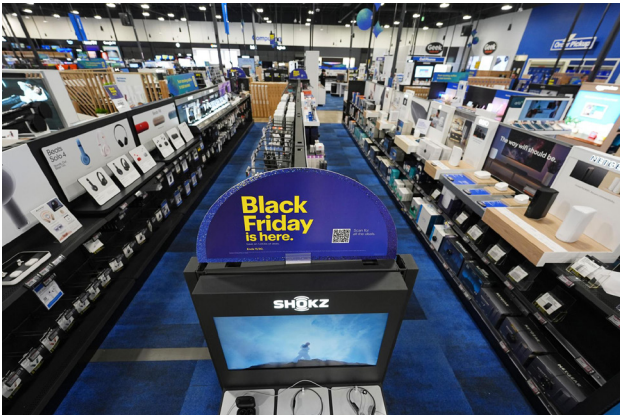
■ Set a budget. Even though Black Friday may feature some hard-to-beat deals, it's wise to determine how much you can afford to spend before you begin shopping. Shopping beyond your means, even if the prices are low, can exact a financial toll.

■ Make a list of recipients. Make a list of the people for whom you will be shopping and some ideas of what to give each individual. This will enable you to look out for particular deals on these items.

■ Compare prices ahead of time. It's important to know how much items cost across different retailers before Black Friday arrives to understand their true value. This will enable you to determine if a Black Friday sale really is a bargain or if it's possible to get a better price at a different time. Smartphone apps like BuyVia, Shopkick and Shopular let you scan barcodes to compare prices and more.

■ Shop online early. NPR says there has been a shift from traditional in-store shopping to online platforms for Black Friday. Many deals now begin on Thanksgiving or even earlier and fall under the Black Friday promotion. Start shopping at home to avoid large crowds and secure limited-time deals. In recent years, many retailers have offered more of the same promotions online as they do in stores.

■ Be wary of sneaky sales tactics. Some stores will offer "doorbuster" exclusions that highlight slashed prices and utilize marketing tactics like countdown timers to encourage shoppers to purchase items without doing their research. This is when knowing the true value of items can help you spot a deal or inflated prices that



Many big-box stores, like Best Buy, are ready with offers to lure shoppers on days like Black Friday and Cyber Monday. DAVID ZALUBOWSKI — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Cyber Monday is the Monday after Thanksgiving. GETTY IMAGES

were then marked down.

■ Limit your stores. If you choose to shop in person on Black Friday, start early in the day and don't run yourself ragged. If you're tired, you may not make the best decisions and could end up spending more than your budget allows.

CONTINUING TO MONDAY

Cyber Monday is the bookend to a series of shopping-centric days preceding Christmas. Along with Black Friday, Cyber Monday presents an additional opportunity to realize great deals on items shoppers may need for gifting or entertaining.

Adobe Newsroom reported that Cyber Monday hit a record \$13.3 billion in online spending in 2024, marking an increase of more than 7% from 2023. Consumers also spent heavily on mobile devices, which accounted for 54.8% of online sales.

Each Cyber Monday offers a chance to save big and streamline shopping. Many of the same tips above apply to Cyber Monday, but here are a few more that are online-specific:

■ Safely shop online. Scammers are in the business of taking your hard-earned money or personal data. They mimic the look of popular stores and promote deals that often are too good to be true. Before entering payment information, double-check

web addresses, spelling and contact information, warns the Better Business Bureau. Check the website URL to ensure that the site is secure before purchase.

■ Look for coupon codes. Check for available promo codes in advance, which can help you get deeper discounts. Utilizing browser extensions that automatically search for and apply coupon codes can streamline this process.

■ Be mindful of shipping costs. Shop at online retailers that offer free shipping whenever possible. Double-check the costs of shipping when it isn't free to ensure that the discount is enough to offset shipping costs.

■ Ship directly to recipients. In some instances, you can enter a recipient's address at checkout and have the items arrive directly to friends or family members who live far away. This can be a great way to avoid potentially costly shipping charges.

■ Shop during off-peak times. The convenience of online shopping enables shopping for gifts when it fits into your schedule. Online retailers are open all hours and seven days a week. Save Cyber Monday bulk shopping for the early morning or late evening when you can think through gifts more readily. Online traffic may slow down transactions made during peak hours, so this is another reason to shop during off-peak times.



Black Friday, Plaid Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday all come on the heels of the Thanksgiving holiday. PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

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SHOP LOCAL

Small Business Saturday comes to many downtowns, including here in Royal Oak. MEDIANEWS GROUP FILE PHOTO

There are many reasons to support Small Business Saturday

By Metro Editorial Services

Small business is big business across much of North America.

Small Business Saturday occurs each year on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, making it part of a weekend that is often characterized as the start of the holiday shopping season.

With small businesses set to take their well-earned turn in the spotlight, consumers can ponder the many reasons to support Small Business Saturday this year:

SMALL BUSINESSES ARE SIGNIFICANT EMPLOYERS

The term "small business" can be misleading, particularly in terms of job creation. While small businesses are generally described as firms with fewer than 500 employees, recent data from the SBA indicated small companies accounted for two-thirds of employment growth across the U.S. over the last quarter-century, ultimately generating around 13 million jobs during that time period. Those jobs are

Independent bookstores are a great stop on Small Business Saturday. PHOTO COURTESY OF DOWNTOWN ROYAL OAK DDA PHOTO

filled by consumers' family members, friends and neighbors, and supporting these employers ensures those individuals can keep earning.

SMALL BUSINESSES HELP TO FUND VITAL LOCAL SERVICES

Another notable reason to support small businesses is their role in creating strong local tax bases. The revenue generated by successful, local small businesses strengthens communities because it translates into tax income for local towns, which benefits schools, community organizations and public safety.

SMALL BUSINESS SPENDING IS MORE LIKELY TO STAY IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Another way supporting small businesses benefits communities relates to where consumers' dollars go once they're spent. Data from the American Independent Business Alliance indicates 48% of each purchase at a local independent business was recirculated locally. By comparison, just 14% of purchases at chain stores were recirculated locally. That means more than three times as much money is staying in communities when consumers buy from locally owned businesses compared to chain retailers.

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ARTS AND CRAFTS

A beginner’s guide to wreath-making

By Metro Editorial Services

Wreaths are popular decorative items that can be customized for any season or occasion. Wreaths are particularly popular during the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas, especially when adorned with evergreen boughs and berries. Learning how to make a wreath can be a handy skill.

Those new to wreath-making need not worry, as it’s relatively easy to learn the technique.

Here are the basics to crafting a wreath, which can then be adorned as desired:

Materials needed

The first step to making a wreath is having the right tools and materials on hand.

■ **Wreath form:** This is the frame upon which the materials will be attached. Choose a form diameter that matches the desired size for the center ring of the wreath, as longer flowers or branches can be attached to create a larger finished wreath. A 10-inch wreath form is good for getting started. The form can be made from metal or grapevine. For a foam form, you’ll be poking wire into the form instead of wrapping it around it to secure your greenery and decorations.

■ **Paddle wire:** Choose 22- to 24-gauge paddle wire to attach greenery and additional items onto the form.

- Clippers and wire cutters
- Craft scissors
- Foliage, flowers and boughs
- Decorative items and accessories
- Floral tape
- Door hanger

Prepare your workstation

Once you have collected your supplies, it’s time to begin. Place all materials on a protected surface. Trim foliage into workable sizes that will fit neatly on the frame, and set aside.

Wreaths are particularly popular during the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas, especially when adorned with evergreen boughs and berries.

Build bundles

The first step to making a wreath is to make small bouquets or bundles of greenery that look good in small bunches, suggests Homesteading Family. Hold the bundle tightly and use floral tape around the stems to keep each bundle together. Repeat this process until you have several bundles to attach to the wreath form.

Start attaching the greenery

Begin by laying a bundle onto the form and using a piece of paddle wire to first wrap around the form, and then wrap around the bundle stems to hold in place. Experts suggest pointing the stems inward and arranging the leaves and greenery to point outwards to create a fan shape. Always place the next bundle slightly overlapping and on top of the previous bundle to cover the stems. Repeat this process all around the wreath form until you reach the starting point.

Add your embellishments

Fill in any sparse areas with some decorations, such as small ornaments, bows, pinecones, ribbons or plastic gems. Simply wrap a piece of wire around the decoration and attach it to the form as you did the bundles. When adding embellishments, work in odd-numbered groupings, as they look more aesthetically appealing on a circle, say the floral experts at Team Flower. Twist all wire ends tightly to avoid scratching your door or wall when the wreath is ready to hang.

Hang the wreath

Place the wreath holder on your door or in another spot. Determine what is the top of the wreath, and twist two pieces of your paddle wire together to thicken it. Fashion the wire into a loop shape so you will have a “hook” for hanging the wreath onto the holder, which makes it more secure.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO EDITORIAL SERVICES

FOOD



Turkey is a popular staple for Thanksgiving dinner. PHOTO COURTESY OF DEPOSITPHOTOS

Is turkey on your Thanksgiving menu?

By Metro Editorial Services

Thanksgiving is celebrated each fall and often serves as the entry point to the holiday season.

Though modern Americans might find the notion of a turkey-free Thanksgiving hard to fathom, the idea of eating the now-popular fowl did not become synonymous with the holiday until the mid-19th century.

According to History.com, President George Washington declared a day of national thanksgiving in 1789, but decades passed before turkey came to be presented as a staple of Thanksgiving celebrations. History.com notes that novelist Sarah Joseph Hale offered a lengthy description of Thanksgiving celebrations in New England in her 1827 novel, “Northwood.”

Hale eventually drew on the writings of William Bradford, who served as governor of the Plymouth Colony from 1621-1657. Bradford’s history of the colony noted the abundance of turkeys around the time of the first Thanksgiving meal, and Hale ultimately drew on



Thanksgiving-celebration-traditional-dinner. MEDIANEWS GROUP FILE PHOTO

Bradford’s recollection and incorporated turkey into her depictions of Thanksgiving meals after expending much energy promoting the idea of a national Thanksgiving holiday throughout the middle decades of the 19th century.

SURVEY SAYS

A 2024 Economist/YouGov poll found that turkey continues to reign supreme on the Thanksgiving dinner table.

When asked what they’ll be eating at Thanksgiving dinner, 67% of participants indicated they plan to eat turkey, making it the most popular food to find its way

onto the dinner table. Additional staples also remain wildly popular among Thanksgiving celebrants, suggesting that food is among the more sacred Turkey Day traditions.

When asked what they plan to eat at Thanksgiving dinner, participants noted some easily recognizable favorites:

- Mashed potatoes: 56%
- Bread or rolls: 55%
- Pie: 54%
- Stuffing: 51%
- Gravy: 51%
- Green beans: 40%
- Sweet potatoes: 39%
- Cranberry sauce: 38%
- Corn: 33%

DECKED OUT

Easy ways to make holiday decorating pet-friendly

By Metro Editorial Services

Decorating is one of the great joys of the holiday season. Stores adorn their front-facing windows with amazing displays and homeowners often deck out residences from top to bottom with all measures of holiday wonderment.

Approximately 94 million households in the United States feature a pet, according to the American Pet Products Association. Many of those households will be decorating for the holidays and must figure out ways to keep homes safe for everyone inside — including those covered in fur.

These tips can ensure a pet-friendly season with lots of holiday decor:

- **Choose shatterproof decorations.** Select shatterproof ornaments and other decorative items that are durable and nontoxic. Items made from felt, fabric or wood tend to be safer than items that can break.
- **Pick pet-friendly plants.** Poinsettias and mistletoe may be traditional, but they can be toxic to pets. Additional options, like a Christmas cactus, can be safer. Artificial plants are another alternative to consider.
- **Opt out of open flames.** It is best to avoid traditional candles when pets are around. Instead, there are plenty of those powered by LED lights that even mimic the flicker of real candles.
- **Avoid tinsel and ribbons.** Digestive issues or blockages can affect pets who ingest tinsel or ribbons. Select pet-safe ribbons or garlands, and skip the tinsel entirely.
- **Avoid edible decor.** Candy canes on trees or popcorn garlands are festive, but they may prove too tempting for pets to resist. Animals can get sick and may knock over the Christmas tree or other



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO EDITORIAL SERVICES

items to access the food.

- **Secure decorative items.** Position the Christmas tree in an area that is not easily accessible. Avoid putting it near furniture that can be used as a jumping-off point. Make sure the tree stand is sturdy enough to prevent tipping, and consider using wire or string to tie the tree to a ceiling or wall anchor for further stability.
- **Mind the scents.** Some fragrances can be overwhelming or irritating for pets, so use scented

diffusers or plug-ins sparingly. A simmering pot of cloves, cinnamon sticks and orange rinds can create a welcoming, all-natural aroma.

- **Create a sanctuary.** Try not to move too many of the pet’s creature comforts, such as favorite toys or bedding. If you must move these items out of the way, gradually introduce the pet to his or her new area, which can be set away from the hustle of the main entertaining area.



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- 21 DAYBREAK: The Music & Passion of Barry Manilow
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December

- 5 Recycled Percussion: HIJINX! | Family Friendly
- 6 My Mother's Italian, My Father's Jewish & I'm Home for the Holidays

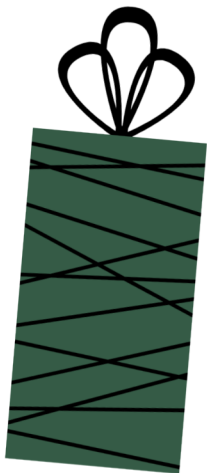


January 2026

- 17 Revisiting Creedence
- 18 Penguins of Antarctica | National Geographic LIVE
- 21 Chicka Chicka Boom Boom | Perfect for Little Ones
- 24 Simple Men & Southern Nights: A Lynyrd Skynyrd Tribute
- 25 Chicago The Musical – **SOLD OUT!**
- 31 Your Generation™ In Concert | Winter Beach Party

February

- 6 The Barricade Boys Broadway Party
- 7 The Lovin' Spoonful
- 20 Hollywood Nights—The Bob Seger Experience
- 26 The Pout-Pout Fish | Perfect for Little Ones
- 27 Master of Illusion—Believe the Impossible
- 28 Good Witch Bad Witch—The music of *Wicked* and other Broadway favorites.



March

- 1 Hamlet | *Stratford Festival On Film*
- 2 Secrets of Space | Young Scholars
- 6 Tartan Terrors Celtic Invasion—Bagpipes, Step Dance and Celtic Music
- 7 Drum Tao | Family Friendly
- 13 Lumia™: A Futuristic Cirque Show | Family Friendly
- 15 Menopause The Musical 2: Cruising Through 'The Change'®
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April

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SET REALISTIC GOALS

Get a head start on New Year’s resolutions

By Metro Editorial Services

After the rush of the holiday season has largely ended, and the excess of the season starts to weigh on celebrants’ minds, it is customary for many people to start thinking about the changes they want to implement in the new year.

According to a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults, 30% of people reported making at least one resolution, with half of this group making more than one. The survey also found that young adults are the most likely to make New Year’s resolutions, with 49% of those between the ages 18-29 saying they have made a resolution.

It’s never too early to start thinking about what to improve upon in 2026, or which goals to set.

Here are some common resolutions and how to implement them:

- Exercise more. Getting in shape is one of the most popular New Year’s resolutions every year. Gym memberships spike and people often invest in home exercise equipment around

this time of year. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, wearable technology continues to be a top trend in fitness and has been a mainstay since 2016. While Fitbit and the Apple Watch series have remained strong contenders, one also may want to invest in the Garmin Vivomove, which boasts wireless charging. Tracking fitness goals can keep those resolutions going strong.

- Improve mental well-being. Getting in shape is not the only health-related goal this time of year. Mental health also comes into play when people make their resolutions. Taking opportunities to slow down and be more mindful can help. One way to do so is through journaling. Human behavior expert and author Natalie Friscia Pancetti, says journaling reduces stress, helps with anxiety, encourages confidence, and can improve perceptions. This is why she developed a journal with inspirational writing prompts as a companion to her “This Too” book and planner.

- Quit smoking. Quitting smoking is a worthy goal.

Health care experts know smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer and has been linked to more than 27 diseases. Many people want to quit smoking, but the Mayo Clinic says only about 5% of people who try to quit succeed without a smoking cessation product. Nicotine replacement items are some of the most popular smoking cessation tools. For those who want to go drug-free, Füm is a device that addresses the three major components of habit formation that occur with smoking. Employing flavored air, the device replaces the fixation of the hand-to-mouth habit with non-addictive plant extracts that are inhaled, simulating smoking without the negative effects.

- Learn a new language. Learning a new skill or language is another popular resolution. Today there are many apps available to help people learn one or more new languages. From Duolingo to Babbel to Memrise, there are programs available whether one is a visual learner or wants to jump right into specific phrases.

DON’T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO EDITORIAL SERVICES

Party pointers for holiday hosts

By Metro Editorial Services

Entertaining is par for the course from November through the end of December. The holiday season is an especially festive time of year, and there’s no shortage of opportunities to celebrate.

Holiday hosts may wonder where to get started in regard to planning their events. It’s easy to be overwhelmed by the process, but with some pointers, just about anyone can have a holiday gathering worth remembering:

- Don’t be scared off by social media. When Rebecca Jennings, Vox senior correspondent covering social platforms, was hosting Thanksgiving for the first time last year, she remarked that her social media feed was filled with tutorials that made her feel like everyone was doing it better than she. Although social media can be great for generating ideas, it also might put undue pressure on hosts who feel they need to measure up to the events

being executed by professionals or people with a lot more time on their hands. It’s fine if a host can’t make everything from scratch or doesn’t have a home that looks like something out of a Hallmark Christmas movie. Guests won’t be expecting perfection; they just want to have fun and spend time socializing.

- Plan around the guest experience. Instead of getting bogged down in details related to decor, holiday hosts should direct most of their attention to the guest experience. They can ask themselves if a guest will even care about something they are considering having at the event. This can certainly save time and stress.

- Keep everyone full. Great food often is at the center of a holiday event, and the menu should be designed to be a crowd pleaser. Work with familiar ingredients that may be presented in unique ways. For example, a traditional caprese salad can be transformed into finger foods by alternating cherry tomatoes, chunks of mozzarella

and leaves of basil on skewers. Don’t forget classics like roasted meats, mashed potatoes, stuffing, rolls and butter, and other hearty items. They will fill guests up and keep them happy.

- Lighten the hosting load. Hosts can identify ways to alleviate stress and free up time to engage with guests. This may involve making the event a potluck where everyone is tasked with bringing a dish. Or, if budget allows, hire bartenders, caterers or a cleaning service to handle some jobs and free up time for hosts to mingle.

- Plan for some entertainment. Music and entertainment can set the tone of the party. Create a playlist that includes a mix of holiday favorites and other tunes. Hosts who want to go above and beyond may want to hire a DJ or live musicians, or enlist a karaoke company to get guests involved.

Entertaining during the holidays, whether it’s a festive party or a formal dinner party, can go more smoothly with some simple planning. Enjoy!



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO EDITORIAL SERVICES

TO A SAFE 2026

How to celebrate sober this New Year’s Eve

By Metro Editorial Services

Revelry and New Year’s Eve tend to go hand in hand.

When the world-renowned ball drops in Times Square at the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Eve, many a celebrant toasts the arrival of a new year with a glass of champagne, a tradition that underscores the role alcohol plays on the final day of the year.

Though alcohol is readily available on New Year’s Eve, there are still plenty of ways for individuals to celebrate sober.

This New Year’s Eve, individ-

uals looking to avoid alcohol can consider these fun ways to ring in the new year:

- Make it a marathon until midnight. Time zones feature prominently on New Year’s Eve, but the excitement sci-fi fans feel come New Year’s Eve has everything to do with a more unique zone. “The Twilight Zone” is a beloved fantasy science fiction horror anthology television series that ran for five seasons between 1959 and 1964. In years past, the SyFy channel in the United States has run a “Twilight Zone” marathon each New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day. Fans of

the classic show can cuddle up and watch all the classic episodes. Viewers who don’t necessarily want to watch “The Twilight Zone” can take inspiration from the SyFy channel and create their own themed movie or television show marathon and invite like-minded friends over for a fun night in.

- Host a sober party. Parties are popular on New Year’s Eve, and there’s nothing stopping sober celebrants from getting in on the fun. Host a party at home and let guests know the party will be a sober affair. Prepare or cater a sit-down dinner

for guests, who will have plenty of time before midnight to engage in conversation with their hosts and fellow celebrants. Arrange for games to be played throughout the night after dinner and be sure to have a television showing a broadcast of coverage from Times Square or another notable locale where people gather to ring in the new year.

- Travel overseas. If you typically spend New Year’s Eve in your home country, consider an overseas trip to take in how people in another part of the world usher in the new year. There’s no shortage of locales

with memorable celebrations. Some spots to consider include Sydney, Australia, which hosts a breathtaking fireworks show each New Year’s Eve, and Edinburgh, Scotland, where a three-day festival culminates with a fireworks display near Edinburgh Castle.

- Take in some entertainment. Many concert venues are booked on New Year’s Eve, when a mix of new and old musical acts take to the stage and typically play until the clock strikes 12, if not beyond. These shows tend to be memorable affairs and make for an ideal way to ring in the new year without alcohol.



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO EDITORIAL SERVICES

2025 HOLIDAY SPENDING REPORT

Travel is down and holiday shopping begins even earlier for many

By Katie Kelton
BANKRATE

The winter holidays are a time for dusting off decorations and observing traditions — but they’re also rife with money decisions.

Americans are choosing how much to spend on travel, gifts and decorations in today’s economy, along with how they’ll make those purchases. Some holiday shoppers and travelers plan to use credit cards, but other popular payment options include debit cards; buy now, pay later services (BNPL); and rewards points.

BANKRATE’S KEY FINDINGS ON HOLIDAY SPENDING

According to Bankrate’s 2025 Holiday Travel Survey and 2025 Early Holiday Shopping Survey:

■ Fewer Americans will travel for holidays this year, compared with last year: 21% plan to fly or stay in a hotel or short-term rental for Thanksgiving or the December holidays, compared to 27% in 2024.

■ Around 2 in 5 holiday shoppers expect higher price tags this year: 41% say they’re concerned winter holiday gifts will be more expensive this year. But only 24% will budget for holiday spending.

■ Roughly half of holiday shoppers will have begun before the end of October: That includes 13% who started shopping or planned to in August, 11% in September and 25% in October.

FEWER AMERICANS PLAN TO TRAVEL THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

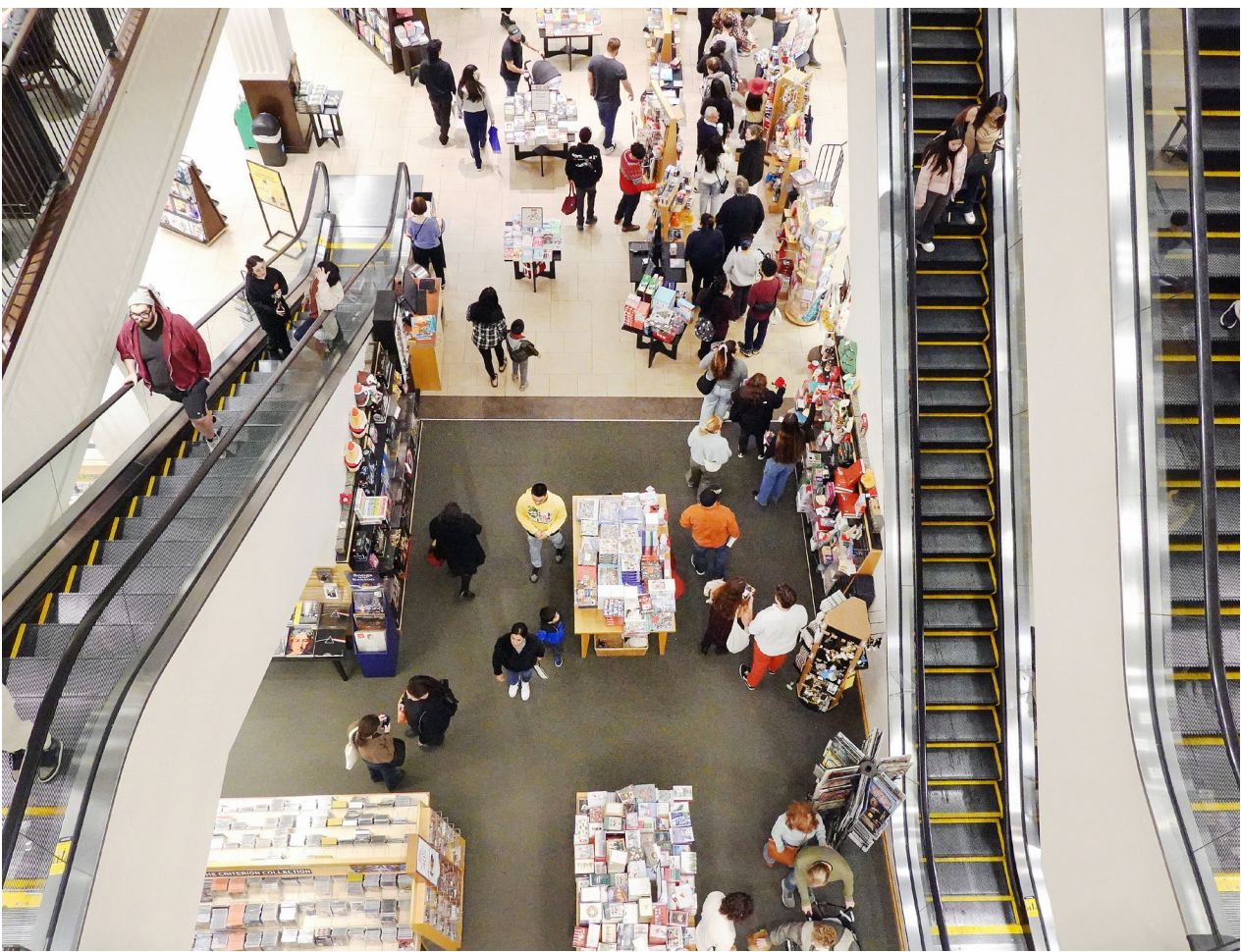
If you’re opting out of a flight to visit Grandma and Grandpa or a trip to Disney for the holidays in 2025, you’re not alone. Fewer Americans plan to travel for Thanksgiving or the winter holidays this year versus last year.

Around 1 in 5 U.S. adults (21%) say they plan to stay in a hotel or short-term rental or travel by airplane for the upcoming holidays. That’s compared to 27% in 2024.

Younger generations, men and parents of young kids are most likely to plan for less holiday travel this year

Interestingly, the people who are overall most likely to travel for the holidays are also the ones responsible for the biggest declines in travel this year. For example, Gen Zers (ages 18-28) and millennials (ages 29-44) are overall the most likely to travel at 30% and 29%, respectively, compared to 16% of Gen Xers (ages 45-60) and 12% of boomers (ages 61-79). But the percentage of traveling Gen Zers dropped the most from last year, by 14 percentage points, followed by traveling millennials, who dropped by 9 points. Gen Xers dropped by 5 points, and boomers are traveling at basically the same rate this year as last, with a 2-point difference.

And while 21% of both men and women say they plan to travel this holiday season,



Shoppers gather in a Barnes & Noble store in the Americana at Brand shopping center on the day after Christmas in 2023, in Glendale, California. **MARIO TAMA — GETTY IMAGES**

that’s down 10 percentage points from 2024 for men and down 2 points for women.

Let’s look at parents — 33% of parents with children under the age of 18 plan to travel this holiday season, down 13 points from 2024. In comparison, 21% of all parents plan to travel this season, down 7 points from last year. Lastly, higher earners are more likely to travel for the holiday season. Of those earning \$100,000 and above, 29% say they plan to travel, compared to 23% of those in both the \$80,000 to \$99,999 and \$50,000 to \$79,999 income brackets and 16% of those earning below \$50,000. Still, all of those income brackets are traveling less than or about the same as they did last year, with drops of 9 percentage points, 2 points, 8 points and 8 points, respectively.

“While many Americans appear to be scaling back their travel plans this year, we’ll have to see if that actually happens,” Rossman said. “Consumer sentiment has been depressed for a while now, thanks mostly to worries about inflation and tariffs, yet people are still spending. The disconnect between what people say and what they do has been growing.”

HOLIDAY TRAVELERS PREFER CREDIT CARDS

Among all the ways to pay, credit cards are the most popular method for holiday travel (63%) — either paid in full (40%) or with a balance paid over time (23%).

Debit cards and/or cash are the second most popular option (44%), followed by rewards points (32%), asking friends/family to pay (13%) and BNPL services (10%).

Both credit cards and travel rewards are more popular this year. The number of adults who say

they’ll use each method of payment is up 4 percentage points and 8 percentage points, respectively, from 2024.

“Don’t forget about your rewards points and miles,” Rossman advises. “Many people have accumulated more than they realize.”

NEARLY 1 IN 3 HOLIDAY TRAVELERS PLAN TO TAKE ON DEBT

Adjusting for overlap between those who plan to carry a credit card balance and those who will use BNPL, nearly 1 in 3 travelers (31%) are likely to take on debt. Millennial holiday travelers are most likely to accrue debt, at 39 percent. That’s compared to 30% of Gen X, 25% of Gen Z and 21% of boomer travelers. And debt usage for holiday travel peaks among middle-income earners of \$50,000 to \$99,999 (39%). The lowest income bracket, those making less than \$50,000, is next (34%), followed by 23% of \$100,000+ earners. Learn how to travel smart and stay out of debt.

AROUND 2 IN 5 HOLIDAY SHOPPERS, ESPECIALLY BOOMERS, FEAR HIGH PRICE TAGS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Most Americans (79%) plan to holiday shop this year. And about half of holiday shoppers (49%) have already begun or planned to begin by Oct. 31.

Two in 5 shoppers (41%) are concerned that holiday gifts will be more expensive this year, which may be why they’re getting a head start.

BOOMERS AND MIDDLE-INCOME EARNERS ARE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT HIGHER HOLIDAY PRICES

Notably, the concern over

high prices is highest among boomers (46%, ages 61-79) and decreases with age. For Gen Xers (ages 45-60), it’s 40% and 39% of millennials (ages 29-44) and 37% of Gen Zers (ages 18-28) noted the same concern. Concern about high holiday prices this year is also more prominent among middle-income households, where 49% of \$80,000-\$99,999 earners and 45% of \$50,000-\$79,999 earners say they’re concerned, versus 38% of both the highest and lowest earners (\$100,000+ and under \$50,000, respectively).

Rossman says the higher earners are easier to explain, as more disposable income allows for some wiggle room in the budget. But lower earners may have already tightened their holiday budgets after high inflation and interest rates in the last few years. It could still be a tough financial season — but they’ve adapted. On the other hand, Rossman explains, middle earners may be newly disenchanted by higher prices and feel like their paychecks aren’t stretching as far as they used to.

CONCERN ABOUT HIGH PRICES MAY BE WARRANTED

■ Money woes are top of mind for some holiday shoppers. More than 1 in 3 shoppers say inflation will change how they shop (36%), and more than 1 in 4 say holiday shopping will strain their budgets (29%) and are stressed about winter holiday shopping costs (27%). In fact, only 11% explicitly said they’re not concerned about the cost of winter holiday shopping.

■ More holiday shoppers will make their purchases online. Nearly 2 in 5 shoppers (38%) intend to make most of

their purchases online, versus 1 in 5 (20%) who plan to make most of their purchases in person. Perhaps surprisingly, boomers are the most likely to make most of their purchases online (45%), compared to just 33% of Gen Zers.

■ Around 1 in 4 shoppers expect to spend more this holiday season than they did last year, compared to 30% who expect to spend less, and 43% expect to spend about the same.

There could be a couple of factors at play.

First, those who plan to spend more may anticipate higher prices this year, Rossman explains. Or, they could simply be earning more income and feeling generous.

Meanwhile, Rossman says those who plan to spend less might be more optimistic about prices this year. Or, they might be shortening their gift lists to save money.

MORE THAN 1 IN 4 SHOPPERS PLAN TO TAKE ON DEBT THIS SEASON, BUT DEBIT CARDS ARE THE TOP PICK FOR PAYMENT

According to the poll, 61% of holiday shoppers expect to use debit cards for at least some of their purchases, avoiding debt but likely sacrificing rewards potential.

Credit cards are the next most popular option, with 57% of shoppers planning to use them. Among those users, 35% plan to pay in full and 21% plan to carry balances over time.

Cash remains a popular option, with 49% planning to pay with cash. Buy now, pay later (BNPL) services (12%), checks (5%) and some other method (3%) round out the ways people plan to pay for their winter holiday shop-

ping. Gen Zers are the most likely to use debit cards (70%) and cash (55%). Boomers are the most likely to pay with credit cards (62%), and millennials are the most likely to use a BNPL service (17%).

After adjusting for overlap, more than 1 in 4 shoppers (28%) may take on debt either with a credit card they will pay off over time or BNPL. But just 4% say they are “willing to take on debt” in another survey question — revealing a possible disconnect between what Americans say and what they do.

SAVE MONEY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

You don’t have to go into debt to pay for the holidays. Instead, try these tips to be a smart shopper this season:

■ Set aside money ahead of time. Half of Americans are in credit card debt, and the holidays make it easy to spend more money than you have. Instead, try building a holiday fund before you start shopping or booking travel. Only around 1 in 4 holiday shoppers (24%) expect to budget for the holidays, but you can be one of them. Learn how to create a sinking fund to avoid going into debt.

■ Start shopping early. The thought of buying gifts in July may sound like holiday creep, but it can actually lead to better deals and help you dodge the December mall frenzy. Take advantage of sales throughout the fall and compare prices without feeling rushed. You could have every item on your list checked off weeks before the holidays, leaving you more time to nosh on cookies and celebrate with your family.

■ Stay flexible with your travel schedule. “You can save on travel costs by going a few days before the holiday and/or coming back a few days later,” Rossman explains. “Or even traveling on the holiday itself. You could also consider nearby airports, connecting flights, less popular flight times and staying with family instead of booking a hotel room.”

■ Try secondhand shopping. A shopper found a play kitchen for \$40 resale, well below the brand-new \$100+ price tag. She says kids don’t know or care if a gift is secondhand — and she can find better prices for items with higher quality and more character. Learn how to thrift to help your budget.

■ Use a rewards credit card. You could earn cash back or points on your holiday purchases, flights or hotel stays with one of the best rewards cards. And those rewards could go toward future gifts or a family vacation. Learn how to choose a rewards card.

■ You can also combine money-saving methods. “Starting early and stacking discounts are strategies that shoppers can deploy to save money,” Rossman advises.



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KEEP IT CLASSY



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Follow these tips when gifting a co-worker

By Metro Editorial Services

The holiday season finds people making shopping lists that include gifts for all of the special people in their lives. Such lists also feature the people with whom individuals may spend the majority of their time each day: co-workers.

Gift-giving co-workers can strengthen professional relationships, build camaraderie and show appreciation while on the job. A well-chosen gift can leave a lasting impression, whether it's given for a birthday, promotion or the holiday season. According to a survey from Office Depot, 70% of employees said their workplace had a holiday gift-giving tradition like Secret Santa or White Elephant. It is important to balance thoughtfulness with professional decorum when selecting gifts.

These guidelines can help anyone navigate workplace giving:

- Consider company culture. One of the first aspects of gift giving among co-workers is understanding

- the culture of the company. In some businesses, gift exchanges are commonplace and encouraged during team celebrations or the holiday season. In others, they may be rare or even frowned upon. It is always a good idea to check with human resources before choosing a gift, particularly for those who are new to the company.
- Be mindful of food and beverages. When choosing to give a gift of food, be aware of any dietary restrictions and allergies the gift recipient may have. Also, while a gift of wine or another bottle of alcohol may seem fitting, one never knows if a person is abstaining from drinking, so it's best to avoid such gifts in the workplace.
- Consider personalized gifts for close colleagues. Giving personalized gifts to close co-workers can be a great way to show appreciation when one knows the recipient well enough. For example, if he or she can't survive without coffee each morning, then a gift of an engraved insulated coffee tumbler can be perfect. If

- the co-worker mentions being part of a book club, a specialized bookmark or gift card to a bookstore will be fitting.
- Be careful with humor. When gifting a funny present, avoid anything that can be misinterpreted or considered offensive. It's best to avoid any political humor. For those unsure about whether a gift might be taken the wrong way, skip that gift and choose another option.
- Limit the cost. Some co-workers may be friends, but it is best to keep all gifts inexpensive and of the same value if the plan is to gift everyone in the department. According to the Office Depot survey, 27% of respondents felt meeting a spending limit is very important. The general range of gift prices at the workplace is between \$20 and \$30.
- Consider the format. One idea for company gifting is to see who might want to participate in a gift exchange, and then everyone brings a grab bag gift. Then there isn't pressure on any one person, and gifts are distributed randomly.

IN HONOR OF

Let charitable gifts spread joy and benefit more than just recipients

By Metro Editorial Services

Charitable giving increases significantly in the months surrounding the holidays.

Approximately one-third of annual giving happens in December, and 10% of all giving occurs in the last three days of the year, according to Charities Aid Foundation America. The surge in donations typically occurs with people's desire to spread holiday cheer, enjoy tax advantages and help people in the community, says Nonprofit Source.

Some people are compelled to donate in the name of another person. Here are some ideas for charitable holiday gifts that benefit many:

DONATE IN SOMEONE'S NAME

To honor a loved one who may be living or deceased, or who fought an illness and won, you can donate to a nonprofit in the name of that loved one. Many charities offer printable or physical cards to let the recipient or their family know a donation has been made in his or her name.

GIVING BACK THROUGH GIFTS

Certain products purchased feature proceeds that go toward a charitable cause. For example, every purchase of TOMS shoes helps fund mental health access and community development, while the body care products from Thistle Farms are made by women survivors of trafficking, prostitution and addiction. Other products may help feed the hungry or support cancer patients.

SUPPORTING ANIMALS

Many area animal shelters or rescue groups offer the opportunity to "adopt" an animal, even if you're unable to bring the animal home. You can pick an animal and



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help provide financially for its care until a permanent home is found.

FAIR-TRADE GIFTS

Making a purchase of fair-trade items means you're often buying handmade and ethically sourced goods. These gifts support artisans in developing countries and help fund community projects. Gift recipients can feel pride in ownership of an item that was designed and purchased with the greater good in mind.

CHARITY GIFT CARDS

Charitable gift cards, like those available from TisBest Charity and CharityChoice, let the gift recipient choose which nonprofit will receive

the funds.

SUPPORT SPECIAL BUSINESSES

Offer gift cards or take people to dine or shop at businesses that support those with special needs. For example, Services to Enhance Potential operates several STEP thrift stores, including Southgate and Dearborn Heights. What separates STEP from most other thrift stores is that it employs people with disabilities and other mental health needs. Shopping there helps to continue to support their efforts to give every employee a sense of pride and purpose while providing them with successful retail and resale work experience.

GET CREATIVE

Holiday decorating gives an easy festive flow to your house

By Metro Editorial Services

Holiday decor takes center stage come November and December, and there are several ways for homeowners to utilize their homes to showcase their holiday spirit during this special time of year.

- Wrap the front door. Gift-wrapped front doors have been popular for some time, and they remain a great way to utilize a home's entryway to spread a little holiday cheer. Shiny, single-color door wraps may never go out of style, but homeowners can choose patterned wraps, as well. A bow door cover lets all visitors know a home and its residents are full of holiday cheer.
- Go for the garland. Garland can add a touch of the holiday season to any room of the house. Wrap garland around a staircase, alternating between the banister and spindles so residents and guests can still safely navigate their way up and down. Garland streamed along the foyer tables sets a decorative tone for all guests, and living room television stands and dining room banquets can also be made a touch more festive with some garland.
- Hang stockings throughout the house. Stockings have long been hung by chimneys (with care), but they can also be incorporated into holiday decor throughout a home. Spread holiday cheer in each room with brightly colored holiday stockings, which can be hung along a staircase wall as well.
- Don't forget the kitchen. Realtors and contractors often note the popularity of the kitchen, a room where families tend to congregate each day before work and school and then again upon returning home. Some festive kitchen accessories, like a holiday-themed cutting board, jar sets and



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- table settings, can bring the spirit of the holiday season into the busiest room in the house.
- Create some pinecone Christmas trees. Involve the whole family in holiday decorating by spending a weekend afternoon creating pinecone Christmas trees. Gather pinecones from your own backyard, if possible, or take a trip to some nearby woods for some supplies. There's no shortage of websites offering instructions on crafting pinecone trees. Once completed, the trees can be placed in various rooms to spread holiday cheer throughout the house.

WHEN DID CHRISTMAS LIGHTS BECOME SO POPULAR?

Holiday lights are now everywhere. Homeowners tend to hang the holiday lights outside their homes around Thanksgiving weekend and keep them up through New Year's Day. Though it might seem like a tradition without a deep history, decorating a Christmas tree with electric lights can be traced all the way back to the nineteenth century.

In 1882, Edward Johnson, who was a friend and colleague of the man

who invented light bulbs, Thomas Edison, replaced candles, which had traditionally been used to briefly light Christmas trees, with light bulbs. But at the time of Johnson's innovation, the high cost and relative infancy of light bulbs ensured the idea did not catch on. And though President Grover Cleveland used electric lights to illuminate a Christmas tree in the White House in 1895, it would be another eight years before General Electric would begin selling Christmas light kits. Those kits cost \$12 in 1903, which equates to several hundred dollars today.

The first outdoor Christmas light shows started to become popular in the 1920s, and this is the same time when commercial sales of Christmas lights picked up.

In the 1960s, GE's decision to begin manufacturing Christmas lights overseas helped reduce the price of outdoor lights even further, thus paving the way for the tradition of decorating home exteriors with string lights during the holiday season to take a firm hold.

And that tradition remains wildly popular today.

JOYFUL SOUNDS

A festive guide to caroling

By Metro Editorial Services

Caroling is a joyful tradition that has endured for centuries. Caroling can be traced to the fourth century in Rome. Latin hymns were written to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Historians believe that even before the emergence of Christianity, midwinter songs existed to lift people's spirits through the bleak weather and extended hours of darkness.

Caroling continues to unite communities and spread holiday cheer through song. It is time to inspire a resurgence of caroling by planning to gather friends, family or neighbors for a caroling session. This guide can help anyone plan a memorable caroling event.

GATHER YOUR GROUP

Begin by assembling a group of singers. No one needs to be an expert singer, as enthusiasm goes a long way. Reach out to friends, family, co-workers and/or local community members. Try to get a diverse group of people together whose main goal is to have fun.

FIND THE RIGHT TIME AND DATE

Typically evening hours after work or during weekends are when you can reach the greatest number of people. The goal is to enable participants to relax and enjoy the experience.

MAP OUT A CAROLING ROUTE

Carefully identify neighborhoods or locations that are known for being festive. While the organizer may choose to carol around his or her own neighborhood, it may be possible to engage more of the community in other settings. Look at local nursing homes or even community centers as caroling locations. Contact businesses along main streets to see if caroling in the center of town to coincide with holi-



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO EDITORIAL SERVICES

day shopping may be a good idea.

COMPILE A LIST OF CLASSICS

Most people will want to hear the carols and other songs they know and love. Make a list of classic holiday songs that aren't overly complicated and singers will already know how to sing, such as "Jingle Bells," "Deck the Halls," "Frosty the Snowman" and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." If a particularly accomplished singer is in the group, he or she might do a featured solo. Be sure to have printed copies of the lyrics and sheet music for all participants.

ENLIST SOME MUSICIANS

Although caroling is traditionally done a capella, having someone who plays an instrument, like a guitar or violin, can ensure everyone is on the right note and can keep the pace of each song.

PLAN TO REST

Singing can be joyful, but also tiring. Bring along refreshments so the carolers can rest their voices and stop to grab a drink or snack. Tea, coffee and cocoa can warm up participants on chilly days. Perhaps make one of the caroling stops in front of a local coffee shop and pop in after a set.

COORDINATE ATTIRE

Although everyone does not have to dress alike, a similar element, such as a red scarf or green mittens, can unite the group.

ADD A CHARITABLE ELEMENT

Consider incorporating a charitable aspect to the caroling. Collect financial or food donations for a local food pantry, or do a toy drive while caroling, encouraging people to offer a wrapped gift in exchange for some beautiful music.



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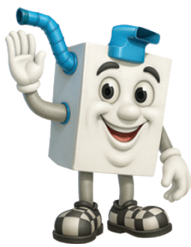
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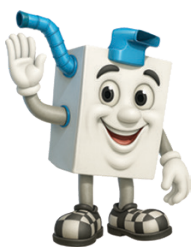
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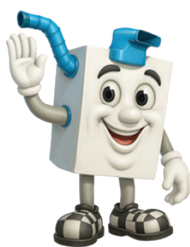
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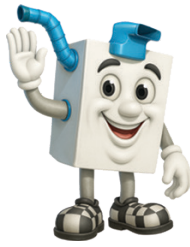
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