



## PRO-SPEAK

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# Organizing tips to make for a happy holidays

Everyone knows that the holidays can be a stressful time, but they can be less so with a little planning. Here are 10 ways to make your holidays less stressful and more joyful:

1) 'Tis the season for drop-in guests. Keep on top of your housekeeping through "de-cluttering sprints." Turn the timer to 15 minutes and tackle clutter in the kitchen, tossing anything that doesn't belong in the kitchen into a laundry basket. De-clutter visible spaces; don't be tempted to organize drawers. When the timer buzzes, move to the living room for another 15 minutes, and then tackle one more room.

2) Make your own wish list. Avoid receiving gifts that will languish deep in your closets by suggesting ideas to well-meaning gift-givers. Ask for gifts that won't take up space, such as a trip to the spa.

3) Brainstorm names of people for whom you'd like to buy gifts. Write gift ideas under their names. Next, group gift ideas by store. If you're planning on going in one big shopping jaunt, map out the

location of stores to prevent back-tracking.

4) Buy extra gifts. The late-remembered hostess or teacher's gift sends you scurrying to the store at the eleventh hour. Instead, add an extra bottle of wine and gourmet coffee to your shopping list.

5) Consider buying gifts online. Avoid slushy parking lots while taking advantage of the free shipping many companies offer. Shopping online is especially convenient for gifts that need to go long distances. Have the item gift-wrapped and shipped directly to the recipient.

6) Use gift bags. Buy a variety of sizes and nametags. Gift bags are reusable and are infinitely easier than wrestling with tape, scissors and bows.

7) Keep a holiday binder. Buy a three-ring binder, some clear plastic sleeves, and index tab dividers. Label the tabs with categories like shopping list, budget, receipts, online order confirmations, addresses (for holiday cards), and party planning. Gathering everything into one place will prevent headaches later, when

you would've been rummaging through stacks of catalogs to find the perfect slippers you had marked.

8) Bake the day away with a friend. Choose recipes that are easily doubled and that freeze well. Enjoy time with a friend while storing up muffins and cookies for upcoming office parties and drop-in guests.

9) Opt out. It's easy to drown in holiday "cheer," so before the season gets rolling, decide which events and traditions are most important to you. Do you really need an elaborate meal both Christmas Eve and Christmas day? You'll likely see that by saying "no" to frivolous activities, you are saying "yes" to time with family and close friends.

10) Put this list in action. Use your calendar to schedule time now for tips Nos. 3 and 9; call a friend to implement tip No. 8; and plan a preliminary shopping trip to get items for tips No. 6 and 7. With a more organized approach to the holidays, you are sure to recover some lost cheer. Happy holidays! BP

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