

November 2023

5 Ways to *Sleigh* Your Holiday Gift Giving



Date/time to schedule: Monday, November 6, 2023 at 7:40PM

Preheader Text: Some of them cost absolutely nothing!

Social Media Share Text: These tips will help prevent your holiday budget from going into the *red*, which is sure to prevent financial *blues* in January.

Body Copy:

Christmas is just seven weeks away, which may sound like a long time unless you're faced with the challenge of buying affordable, yet meaningful gifts for a few people on your list. Here are some ideas that may help you think "outside the gift box" just a little bit.

1) **Set a Budget.** One thing is for sure – you'll over-spend if you don't set a budget. Make a list of all the people you need to buy for and set a spending limit for each person. If you under-spend on one person, that may enable you to over-spend on someone else, but the ultimate goal is not to exceed your overall budget. Remember – it's the thought that counts, not the amount you spend.

2) **Start Early.** The earlier you start shopping, the easier it is to watch for sales. However, once you've made the gift purchase, stick to it – if you end up finding something you like better, just make sure it's not over budget and you can still return the original item.

3) **Download a Gift app.** There are a multitude of free gift apps to help you keep track of gift ideas, purchases you've made, your budget, whether or not you've wrapped each gift, and some can even save images of your receipts. Simply go to your app store and search, "Holiday Gift List," then review each app to see which one is the best fit for you.

4) **Consider Giving Gift Cards.** While giving a gift card may feel a bit impersonal, who doesn't love cash? Not only does a gift card enable the recipient to buy the gift of their choice, but it will save you loads of time shopping and you're guaranteed to stay on budget! Wrap-up the gift card in a fun way, or maybe give a combination of a gift card and a small item under \$5 so the recipient has something to unwrap.

5) **Gift of Your Time.** If you're really strapped for cash or if the recipient's love language is quality time or acts of service, give them the gift of your time! Treat them to a movie or dinner out together, offer to help them do

something around the house or run errands for them. Gifts don't always have to be tangible, and a gift of your time is something only you can give.

How to Use a Personal Loan



Date/time to schedule: Friday, November 17, 2023 at 10:30AM

Preheader Text: The benefits & risks

Social Media Share Text: Personal loans are very versatile and can be a great tool for emergencies and large purchases. Learn more about personal loans and how/when to use them.

Body Copy:

A personal loan can be a great tool when you have an emergency or are making a large purchase. While personal loans are versatile and can be helpful, writer Miranda Marquit with Investopedia reminds us there are some risks in using them—especially if you become too reliant on them.

How Personal Loans Work

Many personal loans are unsecured, meaning that you don't usually need to provide something valuable as collateral, while some personal loans can be secured with a car title or another possession. With a personal loan, you borrow a lump sum and usually pay a fixed interest rate, making installment payments over a period of time that is determined by the loan terms.

Personal Loan Uses

Personal loans are versatile and can be used for a variety of purposes. Here are some common ways to use a personal loan:

Debt Consolidation

If you have a lot of high-interest credit card debt or other loans, a personal loan can be used for debt consolidation. Depending on the situation, you might be able to get a large personal loan and use that money to pay off your smaller loans. With the help of debt consolidation, you can potentially streamline your debt and perhaps pay it off earlier.

Home Improvements

Often, relatively small home improvement projects can be completed with the help of a personal loan. You won't need to use your home equity as collateral if you get a personal loan to remodel your bathroom or add a deck. Additionally, if you want to start your project quickly, you can likely get your funds much sooner.

However, a personal loan might have a higher interest rate than a home equity loan or home equity line of credit (HELOC), so consider whether you want to pay that higher cost.

Emergencies

An unexpected expense, such as when your car breaks down or an appliance stops working, can be covered with the help of a personal loan. You can usually get the money quickly, and it can bridge the gap if you don't have an emergency fund to cover the cost.

Depending on the rate you receive, a personal loan can be a better choice than using a payday lender or pawnshop, both of which might charge interest rates in the triple digits.

Medical Bills

If you need dental work done or have a procedure performed out of network, a personal loan can help you cover the cost. Personal loans can also be used for elective procedures, like Lasik or cosmetic surgery.

However, before getting a personal loan to cover healthcare costs, check to see if there are alternatives. Some hospitals and other facilities will set up interest-free payment plans, which can be a better choice than a costly personal loan.

Large Purchases

Finally, personal loans can be used to make large purchases and pay for events. You can use a personal loan to pay for a wedding, vacation, new computer, or even your holiday expenses. Big-ticket items might be difficult to save up for over time, and a personal loan with manageable payments can help you reach your goals faster.

NOTE TO CLIENTS WHO ARE OFFERING A HOLIDAY LOAN = We will include a graphic of your holiday loan near this paragraph.

Things That You Can't Use a Personal Loan for

While personal loans are versatile and can be used for a variety of purposes, they can't be used for everything. Some expenses that personal loans usually can't be used for include:

- **College tuition:** Most of the time, when you apply for a personal loan, the lender will ask to make sure that you aren't using the loan for educational expenses, like tuition. In general, federal and private student loans are considered more appropriate for college tuition.
- **Business startup costs:** Personal loans are meant for personal uses—not to start a business. Instead, check for loans backed by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) if you're interested in getting what you need to start a business.
- **Down payment:** In general, you're not supposed to use a personal loan to make a down payment on a home. Consider getting help with a down payment from a family member or seeing if you qualify for a down payment assistance program.

[Article source.](#)

How to Protect Your Finances if You Lose Your Phone



Date/time to schedule: Sunday, November 26, 2023 at 6:20PM

Preheader Text: Take precautions before it happens.

Social Media Share Text: Losing your phone can be a real nightmare, especially if you haven't taken precautions to secure your information. This article explains the various precautions you should take now, and what to do the moment you realize you've lost your phone.

Body Copy:

Lose your smartphone and you could have more to contend with than missed calls and messages, a lost contact list and Wordle withdrawal. Anyone who finds your lost phone will have an opportunity to access your finances, steal your identity or both.

Writer Lisa Gerstner with Kiplinger Personal Finance encourages you to think of your smartphone as part wallet, part computer. If someone were to access your online bank account or eBay application, for instance, the funds in your checking account could be gone in minutes. Thieves could also get information from your email messages as well as reset passwords for your online accounts and then retrieve them from your email account. Your contacts could also become targets for phishing schemes.

Take preventive measures. Use your phone's security settings to lock your screen with a password or numerical passcode. According to a Pew Research survey, 28% of smartphone users don't use any sort of lock on their phones. That can easily allow someone to access all of your data. As phones have evolved, you can also use biometrics like your fingerprint or your face to lock and open your phone. Usually, they're utilized in conjunction with your PIN. Don't use an obvious PIN (such as your birth year) or a simple pattern to unlock your screen. Hide the phone as you enter the code if strangers are nearby.

When you finish using your applications on your phone, log out. At the very least, sign out of your banking and payment apps (and any others that could allow someone to go on a spending spree). Don't allow an app to save your log-in information for easy access. Even social media apps that seem harmless could be a treasure trove for a crook, says Eduard Goodman, former chief privacy officer for Identity Theft 911. The list of connections on your Facebook account may reveal your mother's maiden name, for example.

If your phone is lost or stolen, take action right away. You can install a location-tracking app on most smartphones. Apple's iPhone has the Find My iPhone app built in, but you need to activate it. Google's Find My Device works on Android phones connected to a Google account, or you can use apps such as "Where's My Droid." The feature is a big help if, say, you can't remember where you left your phone. And if it has been stolen, police may be able to use the app to help track down the thief.

Also, set up your phone so that you can remotely erase its data. Your wireless carrier may offer this service, and many security apps include the feature. “Find my” features also offer an erase capability. Your data won’t be lost if it’s saved automatically to your Google or iCloud account, and you can regularly perform backups by plugging your phone into your computer. But keep in mind that a sophisticated thief may be able to restore the information, says Kevin Johnson, senior security consultant for Secure Ideas.

What you can do to combat malware and more. Losing your phone isn’t the only potential danger. Hackers can collect sensitive information through malware. Android phones are particularly susceptible because developers can more easily submit virus-laden apps. (Google has an open-source market, while Apple has a more rigorous screening process for apps.) Research an app’s developer and read reviews of the app before you download it. If you receive suspicious-looking text messages, don’t reply or click on links.

Using unsecured Wi-Fi such as public networks could leave you vulnerable to hackers. If you do use publicly available wifi, make sure to do so with a virtual private network (VPN).

Another simple step to protect yourself is to be aware of your Bluetooth connection. If it’s open, it could leave your phone vulnerable to hackers. Goodman suggests turning off your cell phone at night to avoid stealth attacks while you sleep.

[Article source.](#)