

# Get \$MART Wausau C O A L I T I O N

*"Educating people to make smart money choices."*

## Q Do you have any tips on how to control holiday spending?

A The joy of the holiday season can sometimes be overshadowed by the stress caused by out-of-control holiday spending. But as we all know, the spirit of the holidays can make us temporarily forget the financial discipline we were committed to in November.

Holiday spending should be planned just as any other household expense and should be saved for. While it may be too late to set aside a holiday fund this year, it's not too late to set parameters to ensure the holiday cheer doesn't turn into a financial hangover.

- **Set a budget** – Hands down this is the best way to stay out of debt. List everyone who will get a gift from you and set a dollar amount on that gift and be sure to track your spending.
- **Buy Gift Cards** – Although once viewed as impersonal, gift cards are quickly becoming the present of choice.
- **Use Your Credit Card Wisely** – If you like shopping with a credit card; try to use one that benefits your family by earning a cash rebate or points toward something you have on your own gift list. Pay off the balance as soon as possible to avoid finance charges.
- **Use Your Check Card** - Online tracking of expenses with a check card can be a real eye opener to how much you are spending. Find a check card that provides perks for usage such as discounts at certain retailers, redeemable points towards merchandise or cash back.
- **Think Long Term** – Once the holidays are over, start planning for next year. Post holiday sales are great for bargains. Set up an automatic transfer from your checking account to your savings account every month to accumulate a nice cushion.

Following even just one of these tips may make for a happier and less stressful holiday season!

Visit [www.getsmartwausau.org](http://www.getsmartwausau.org) for information on free or low-cost local programs to help you make smart money choices.