

The **CoolSavings** 2008
Holiday Savings Guide



Tips and advice to help make your holiday season as special, affordable and stress-free as possible.



Save on Gifts

Show your friends and family they're loved while sticking to your budget.

Do your research. Online comparison shopping sites are a perfect way to find the best price on the gifts you're looking for. [Compare prices](#) on gifts—especially big-ticket items like [computers](#), [cameras](#), and [video game](#) consoles. You can choose from multiple retailers all in one spot and then either buy online, or call around to your local retailers to make sure the exact item you want is in stock. Be aware that the best prices are generally found online.

Shop online to save money, gas and time. This year, more than 80% of online retailers are offering big discounts and deals according to the industry group, the National Retail Federation. Use resources like [CoolSavings' Online Coupons section](#) to see a multitude of special offers from major online retailers, all in one place. Get special coupon codes you enter at the checkout page or click through special links to receive free shipping, percentage-off discounts and more at the retailer's site.

Double up. If your child, friend or relative wants an especially expensive gift, consider asking others to chip in with you. Sharing the burden means you won't feel bad for denying the special present, and the recipient will understand the value of their good fortune!

Organize a gift exchange. Whether you're exchanging gifts with family, friends or co-workers, draw names from a hat and set a maximum spending limit. Having fewer gifts to buy not only saves money but allows you to put more thought into your gift choice, which will be appreciated by the recipient.

Make a gift grab bag for the kiddies. If your brood includes many youngsters, buy a bunch of fun items from the dollar store, wrap them in tissue, and put them in a big grab bag. Kids will have fun picking out their mystery gifts and sharing them with each other—just be sure to pick toys and games that can be enjoyed right away.

Leave a paper trail. While problems with online shopping are extremely rare, be sure to print out records of your online transactions. Order confirmation numbers, shipping tracking numbers, and confirmations of discounts are all invaluable in case of a problem. Put them all in a folder so you know where to look.

Take advantage of price guarantees. Few retailers will tell you this, but a store's price guarantee policy might give you a refund on the difference if an item's price drops within a set amount of time from your purchase. Try sites like [Price Protectr](#) to track your purchases. These sites will monitor price changes for the duration of your store's price guarantee, and will let you know if the price drops.



Save on Holiday Dinner

Host a holiday dinner while enjoying yourself, maintaining your sanity and saving some dough!

Shop at more than one store to get the best prices. Purchase what you can from a big discount store rather than getting everything at your local grocery store where items tend to be more expensive. Then, visit the grocery store for specialty items you can't find elsewhere.

Use coupons and buy on sale. Coupons are still one of the absolute best ways to save money on your groceries. The key is to make a list of what you need and then utilize all of your resources to find the right coupons. Look for coupon savings in the Sunday newspaper, in your local grocer's mailers, and at sites like [CoolSavings](#), where you can print the coupons from your computer to use at the store.

Substitute when you can. You don't always need to use top-quality ingredients. For example, don't spend money on expensive artisan bread for your stuffing when half-price day-old bakery bread will work just as well. For baked goods and desserts, try generic brands for butter, sugar, flour and chocolate chips.

Make it from scratch. If you have the time, almost everything is less expensive if you make it from scratch. For example, pumpkin pie is cheaper to make than to buy and tastes just as good if not better than a store-bought pie. Plus, you can save even more money by using ingredients like frozen pie crusts, which are often on sale this time of year.

Host a potluck. If your budget (and time) is limited, have a potluck dinner. Guests are often more than happy to bring their prize dish to share. This will save you both money and the stress of handling all of the cooking yourself!

Go light on the appetizers. Keep the appetizer selection small and light. This will ensure you save money and waste less, and your guests will still have hearty appetites when it's time for the main meal.

Limit the number of side dishes. Hosts tend to provide way more food than is needed out of fear of not having enough to go around. Try limiting your sides to three dishes such as one potato, one vegetable and one stuffing dish. Serve these along with meat and dinner rolls, and your guests are sure to be satisfied with dinner and have room for dessert too!

Recycle. Save those leftovers! Whether or not you spend a lot on holiday food, you can stretch your leftovers to last for another meal or two, or even more. Check online recipe sites for ideas on how to dress up leftover main dishes like turkey.



Save on Holiday Decorations

Get creative, start new traditions and make meaningful gifts.

Be creative. Second-hand stores and thrift shops are great sources for inexpensive holiday decorations. Don't just look for holiday-themed decorations though; be creative and look for items with lots of potential like antique-looking glass bowls and vases and rustic-looking baskets, which can be filled with flowers, candy or homemade decorations.

Be crafty. Making your own decorations is an easy and fun project to work on with the kids. Consider cutting snowflakes of all different sizes and shapes from plain white paper. Collect pine cones outside and spray paint them red and silver or glue white glitter on them, then place them in a glass bowl to make a beautiful centerpiece.

Be a candy-striper. Another festive but inexpensive idea is to use holiday-striped candy canes to decorate your tree. Get them in a bulk box for as little as 15¢ per stick and then keep them around for a treat afterward! Another creative use of food is going back to the tradition of using strings of cranberries or popcorn on the tree.

Reuse and recycle. Use what you have from last year! Or consider trading with a family member or friend to freshen things up without spending extra money. Repurpose items you'd normally throw out or recycle. Baby food jars and mayonnaise jars, for instance, can be turned into candle holders and luminaries, and can be decorated on the base or sides with paint, glitter glue or ribbons.

Go green. If you need new lights for your tree or outdoors, purchase strings of LED lights instead of those with traditional incandescent light bulbs. LED lights are a little more expensive but they lower your electric bill immediately since they use 90% less energy and last 20 times longer than traditional holiday lights.

Make it a family affair. Save money, express your creative side and create a meaningful tradition by having the whole family get together to make ornaments. Hit the craft stores to [decorate round clear glass ornaments](#) with paint, glitter, family pictures and anything else you can think of. Or go simple and trace holiday cookie cutters or [free printable stencils](#) onto colored paper. Not only will you save on ornaments, but you'll create treasures everyone will cherish for years to come. Be sure to write the name of the person who made the ornament and the year on the back.



Save on Holiday Travel

Finances shouldn't keep you from family and friends. Use these ideas to make travel affordable.

Compare first and buy online. Airline tickets are generally cheaper online. Utilize sites like Travelocity, Expedia and Travel Zoo as well as [CoolSavings](#), to find your best options for airfare, hotels and rental cars. Also, it's almost always a good idea to book early for a cheaper flight, but large price drops can become available as the holiday gets very close. If you try waiting for a price drop, monitor sites daily—but don't wait too long or you'll be stuck with an even higher price!

It's all in the timing. To save on airline tickets, avoid departing the Saturday before Christmas and returning the Sunday after Christmas, when prices are usually highest. If it's not too inconvenient, consider traveling on Christmas day when prices are cheaper. In general, wait to fly home from a trip until Monday or Tuesday when ticket prices are lower than they would be during the typical Wednesday-to-Sunday travel cycle.

Go business class. If you can't stay with family or friends, hotels in downtown business districts or near the airport are a good bet to save money. They normally cater to business travelers and can offer sizable discounts during holidays when they're less busy.

Cruise around. Saving on car rentals is all about location as well. Avoid renting a car at the airport and instead plan ahead by looking for rental sites nearby. Taking a taxi to a car rental site a few extra miles from the airport, for instance, can mean a savings of hundreds of dollars.

Asleep, but not at the wheel. If you have more than one adult in the car during long road trips, avoid paying for hotels altogether by taking turns at the wheel while the other person sleeps.

Bring your lunch. Pack your own snacks and beverages when traveling to avoid paying ridiculous prices at the airport and at restaurants near the highway. If you have kids, they're bound to want cookies or candy if they see them while passing the little shops in the airport and convenience stores, so be prepared! Avoid a tantrum by packing some of their favorite snacks such as carrots, raisins, cookies or gummy bears.



Save on Greeting Cards and Gift Wrap

It's a wrap! Just try these fun, festive and frugal ideas.

Go digital. Ecards are a great way to save money and paper too. Many sites like Hallmark.com offer beautiful, free ecards you can send to everyone on your email list. If you send a family photo every year, just send a digital photo to your email list with a family update or personal note. Another option for digital holiday cards is online services like Smilebox, which have really cute cards that you can customize with your own photos, music and videos. On a silly note, you can also Elf Yourself—your friends and family should get a kick out of it!

Greet creatively. It's easy to make your own cards if you have a little time. Use colored paper, holiday greeting cards from years past, magazine cut-outs, glitter, doilies, cotton balls, wrapping paper, etc. Anything goes!

Wrap it in laughter. Recycle your newspaper and save money—simply use the comics section to wrap kids' gifts.

Redecorate. Take those holiday gift bags from winters past and reuse them as-is, or redecorate them as needed. Gift bags are a real time saver! Save gift wrap, gift bags, bows and cards to re-use next year, too.

Think ahead. Prepare for next year by waiting until after the holidays to buy up cards, gift wrap, decorations and calendars at significant discounts during clearance sales. Holiday items are usually half-off starting December 26th!

Look no further. Print Free Gift Tags from CoolSavings right at home—it's easy! Choose from these three cute, seasonal designs.

Just click your favorite design, print and cut!

