



Extension News Column

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Taming that Gift giving list

Is the number of people on your gift giving list getting you down? As our economic conditions have gotten more difficult, many families are looking for ways to trim the giving list. By thinking ahead and coming to an agreement with those on your gift giving list, you can reduce your shopping woes.

Now is the time to look at how to change your gift giving habits. A little time spent now will pay off in less money spent and more enjoyment of the holidays.

Just like Santa, the first step is to make a list. Write down everyone you will have to buy gifts for. Be sure to include family, friends, co-workers, even neighbors that you need to remember. Now look at how you can reduce the number of gifts and the cost of those gifts.

The easiest thing to reduce the expenditure on gifts is to reduce the number of gifts you are buying.

When all is said and done, isn't it the kids gifts that you most enjoy buying for? Several years ago we decided in my husband's family that we would only buy for the kids. That reduced our list of gifts by six and allowed us to spend more per child.

Or you can draw names just like we did in grade school. Each person only has one present to purchase. Be sure to set a limit so no one feels slighted or embarrassed by the largess.

Consider doing a family gift, instead of individual gifts for each member. This again simplifies your list by reducing the number of gifts you have to purchase

Another idea is to reduce the cost of gifts on the list. Go through the list again and see who might enjoy the gift of time rather than something that costs money.

Think about who would enjoy spending time or doing a special event. Promise to take a child (or an adult) on an outing. Write out a card promising a trip to the movie or the museum or even the library. Let them pick the date for the outing.

Or look for simple gifts that require just a little effort on your part. Did you know there is a downloadable recipe card online? Go to www.countryclipart.com/recipecards.htm and download the recipe card of your choice. It can then be filled out with your favorite recipes by hand or on the computer. You can make a cookbook of favorites, or just make one item for a gift and enclose the recipe card.

A friend showed me how to take photos and put them in a book for another simple present. You download your photos, create your book, and order it. There is a small charge, but it comes bound in book form. What a great present for just a little cost.

Think about putting together a basket with a collection of items. Start with a basket from the thrift store and add items related around a theme. Make a movie basket with a new release DVD, microwave popcorn, and a bottle of soda. Or for a gardner, put in a hand trowel, seeds, garden gloves, and potting soil. How about a breakfast basket, including hot cocoa, coffee, a loaf of quick bread or muffins, and a jar of jam? The possibilities are endless, so put on your thinking cap.

Last year, my friend said "No more stuff". So her gift required some additional thinking. I made her a gift bag. It included books from the second hand store, a jar of homemade coffee mix, teabags, a few muffins for a treat, and chocolate. All were placed in a reuseable shopping bag from the grocery store. I included a note telling her to be sure and donate the books to a thrift store for resale after they were read and to use the bag to carry her groceries home from the store. She was tickled because everything was consumable or recyclable.

Christmas presents don't have to break the bank. Use a little imagination and you can fill that list and still stay under budget.