

HOW TO SURVIVE FINANCIAL MADNESS: THE HOLIDAY QUARTER

HALLOWEEN

1. Determine how much money you have to spend on Halloween stuff between now and October 31st (the available balance on your credit card doesn't count!) This is your Halloween budget.

2. Ballpark the amount of money you typically spend for costumes, candy, decorations and parties during Halloween.

A. If you don't remember what you've spent in the past, look back at old bank or credit card statements. Chances are, you can find these online.

B. You can also "window shop" online and find out what the going rate is for the costumes, decorations, etc. that you're considering. Use the average dollar amount as your "ballpark" for each item.

3. Add up the dollar amounts of all items, and subtract the total from your budget. Do you have enough to pay for everything? If so, great! If not, go to step #4.

4. Prioritize your spending

A. List your expenses in order of importance. Then assign an amount of money to each expense, starting with the most important, until you reach zero. Any expense you don't have money assigned to gets cut.

Examples:

1. **Costumes** - Make the kids first priority. If you're looking to cut costs here, consider getting creative with their costumes – and get them involved! Can you create a costume from items you already own? Once the kids have costumes, and if there's not enough left for your costume, get creative again, or re-use an old one. It might be also fun to trade with friends!

2. **Candy** – If candy doesn't fit in your budget, or it's not that important, turn the lights off and go to bed early! You can also cut costs by buying cheaper candy, or buying in bulk and splitting the cost with friends.

3. **Decorations** – Unless you're having a party, do you really need them? If not, skip it altogether. If they're a must, but you're low on funds, hit the thrift stores and go cheap! Or, get creative and make your own!

4. **Parties** – if you've already planned a party, you're committed, so try to cut costs wherever possible. If you've haven't invited anyone yet, consider putting it off until next year, and establish a budget for it. Then, you can throw an EPIC party!

THANKSGIVING

1. Determine how much money you have to budget toward Thanksgiving, and how much you can save between now and then. This is your Thanksgiving budget.
2. Make a list of expenses you'll need to cover, including food if you're hosting Thanksgiving dinner, or any travel expenses you need to plan for.
3. Establish a ballpark dollar amount for each expense and total them up. Based on the money you have now, and the time between now and Thanksgiving, will you have enough for everything? If so, great! If not, go to step #4.
4. Prioritize your spending—make a priority list and see how far you can stretch your budget. If you run out before you make it through the list, consider what cuts you can make, or look for ways to save money.

If you're trying to cut costs on travel, here are a couple things you can try:

1. Book flights as early as possible, to get the best rate.
2. If you need to rent a car, use a rental place somewhere other than an airport – the savings are many times big enough that, even if you have to Uber from the airport to a rental car facility, it's well worth it!
3. Ask for any discounts you may be entitled to with a AAA, Costco or other membership clubs.
4. Check your credit card benefits, as some provide travel discounts and perks

If you're trying to cut costs on food, here are a couple ideas:

1. Take your guests up on their offers to bring a side dish! This will also save you time in the kitchen!
2. And, of course, scour the internet for coupons and sales at the grocery stores!



Christmas

Christmas has a lot more moving parts – there’s food, gifts, wrapping, cards, shipping, traveling, outings, parties, etc. This adds up really fast. The good news is, you’ve got 3 months to plan for this one, and save up a bit more money.

So again, make a list of expenses you’ll need to cover, establish a ballpark dollar amount for each item and total them up. But how can you possibly budget for gifts, when you probably don’t have a list of what you’re getting for each person? Here’s what works for me:

1. Make a list of all the people you will buy for.
2. Establish a set dollar amount for how much you’ll spend on each person, then add all dollar amounts together and you have your Christmas gift budget!

Helpful Hint: I spend the same amount on all adults, and a smaller amount that is the same for all kids. So, if I budget \$50 for all adults and \$25 for all kids, I will need \$250 to cover 4 adults and 2 kids.

Add your gift budget to the list of expenses, like wrapping, cards, outings, food, etc., and you know how much you need to have the Christmas you desire. If you don’t have enough money on hand and can’t save