

Keeping on top of Christmas

With the festive season fast approaching, Family Life speaks to the Financial Ombudsman for some seasonal tips to help you keep on top of your cash!

No matter how you're planning on spending your Christmas this year, keeping on top of your costs now can help take the sting out of the New Year. And it's not just budgeting – there are lots of ways you can save money or avoid money-related mishaps this season.

The Financial Ombudsman shares some top tips for a Christmas free of money worries...

SHOP AROUND

Look out for discounts and compare prices between shops or by looking on the internet. If you're buying online, make sure you're happy to hand over your card details. Consider paying using a credit card as it might offer you more protection if something goes wrong with the item you're paying for.

PRICEY PRESENTS

While many people are budgeting for Christmas this year, there may still be some high-value presents wrapped up under the tree. Check your contents insurance policy – you may find you're not fully covered if these items are stolen or damaged.

KEEP IT HIDDEN

If you're doing a lot of shopping for the festive period, don't leave your purchases on display in your car. Most insurance



policies won't cover you for items that are stolen if they're left in full view of passersby.

KEYS IN THE CAR

If you're warming up your car engine in cold weather, don't leave the keys in the car and the vehicle unattended. You could find you're not covered by your motor insurance policy if it gets stolen.

GET AWAY

If you're planning to take a holiday abroad over Christmas, check your travel insurance policy in advance so you know what you're covered for. Keep your policy documents and contact telephone numbers to hand too, in case you need to make a claim.

BUY NOW, PAY LATER

Buying a large gift using interest free credit? Make sure you know when the deal ends, as interest rates can be high if you miss the deadline.

BANK HOLIDAY BLUES

Keep an eye on payment dates for bills and regular payments like direct debits and standing orders during bank holidays. Bank holidays are not 'working days' for banks so payments might be delayed or bounced if you don't have the money available in your account.

CRUNCH THOSE CARDS

Interest rates can vary considerably on different credit cards, so check the current rate before you spend. Keep on top of what you're paying out, and if you can't clear the whole balance try to work out what you're able to pay over the minimum amount.

ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

A house full of people at Christmas can result in breakages and spills. Accidental damage policies are often sold as 'add-ons' to contents insurance policies to cover these mishaps. Check with your insurer to see if you're covered.



If a problem arises and you can't sort it out with your bank or insurer, the ombudsman may be able to help.

**Get in touch on: 0300 123 9 123
www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk**