



ALLIANT[™]
credit union



members circle

www.alliantcreditunion.org

a newsletter for Alliant Credit Union members

November 2011

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Five smart holiday shopping tips

It's that time again – time to complete or at least begin – your holiday season shopping. This year, how about giving a gift to yourself by taking it easy on yourself and your wallet? Here are some tips on how to have fun shopping and bring joy to others, while avoiding bah-humbag shopping hassles and overspending.

1. Be smart at the outset and develop a budget. Take a realistic look at your finances and determine your overall spending limit. Then, decide how much you can afford to spend on each individual gift. Next to each person's name, write the maximum you will spend on him or her. Also, remember to include any essentials, such as entertainment, decorations, cards and tips or small gifts for coworkers, babysitters, dog walkers, teachers, etc. Consider including a few extra generic gifts, such as picture frames, to have on hand if someone unexpectedly gives you a gift and you want to reciprocate. Do the math and, if need be, adjust your plan to stay within your budget. Costs can add up quickly so know your bottom line and stick to it.

2. Develop a gift checklist. Get a pen and paper, and brainstorm ideas for what to buy individuals – within the amount you have budgeted for them. Refer to your checklist when you shop so you don't forget anything. Meanwhile, stick closely to your list. Beware of impulse-buy "specials" and "deals" you encounter that may tempt you to blow your budget. Be sure to ask yourself, "Would I buy this if it weren't on sale?"



3. Shop at stores during off-peak times. Waiting until the last minute to do your shopping is a recipe for stress and overspending, while shopping early gives you time to comparison shop for the best prices. To avoid crowds and long lines, get started *today*, if you haven't already. Good times to shop: in the morning or late at night. Bad times: right after work or on weekends. If you have a specific item in mind to buy, consider calling the store first to make sure it's available there.



4. Go online to research the best product at the best price – and to buy. Let's say you want to buy your son a digital camera, but are unsure which one to get. Go online and study reputable user reviews and ratings. When you select the product you want, visit sites such as mysimon.com or pricegrabber.com, to find the best price. Also, check delivery charges and "ship by" dates to ensure your gift will get to the recipient in time. Many online retailers will offer free shipping – at least for standard ground shipping.

5. Save your receipts. Check a store's refund or exchange policy and keep your receipts. Whenever possible, also get a gift receipt for items. That little piece of paper makes it easier for a person to return a gift if he or she – forbid – doesn't like it or if it's defective.

Sources: realsimple.com, money.cnn.com, cbsnews.com, christmas-celebrations.com, loanbased.com and goodmoneyhabits.wordpress.com

DIVIDEND

December Savings Dividend

DECLARED OCTOBER 20, 2011

The **December 2011 Savings and IRA dividend**, declared 10/20/11, provides a Compounded Annual Percentage Yield of **1.15% APY**

Dividends are paid on the last day of the month to accountholders who have maintained an average daily balance of \$100 or more. Savings dividend is subject to change monthly.

December Checking Dividend

DECLARED OCTOBER 20, 2011

The **December 2011 High Rate Checking dividend**, declared 10/20/11, provides a Compounded Annual Percentage Yield of **1.10% APY**

Checking dividends are paid on the last day of each month to accountholders who meet the requirements of the account. Checking dividend is subject to change monthly.

Head's up: Starting in February 2012, Alliant will have a new address for you to mail in your deposits and payments. Stay tuned to learn the details in our newsletters and website.

Take the "Holiday Shopping Quiz"

You know the drill. The winter holidays approach and it's time to buy gifts. But, how well do you know some of the finer points of holiday shopping? Take this quiz to find out.



- 1) What percentage of U.S. adults say they start their holiday shopping before Thanksgiving?
 - a) 15 percent
 - b) 35 percent
 - c) 50 percent
- 2) On Black Friday (the day after Thanksgiving), whom do the majority shop for?
 - a) Their kids
 - b) Themselves
 - c) Gift recipients
- 3) How many Americans say they want to get a gift card this season?
 - a) 30%
 - b) 45%
 - c) 60%
- 4) How much is the average U.S. household expected to spend on gifts and seasonal merchandise this holiday?
 - a) \$704
 - b) \$804
 - c) \$904
- 5) Generally, what shopping day generates the most sales all year?
 - a) Black Friday
 - b) Cyber Monday
 - c) The last Saturday before Christmas
- 6) True or False: Mother's Day and Christmas generate the most sales for perfume
 - a) True
 - b) False
- 7) What was the first toy to be advertised on TV?
 - a) Etch-A-Sketch
 - b) Mr. Potato Head
 - c) Slinky
- 8) What percent of Americans are expected to purchase holiday items online this year?
 - a) 35%
 - b) 50%
 - c) 65%
- 9) What continent did the actual living St. Nicholas live on?
 - a) Africa
 - b) Europe
 - c) Asia
- 10) What is the most popular type of products people buy during their holiday shopping?
 - a) Electronics
 - b) Toys/games
 - c) Clothing/shoes

How well did you do on the quiz. Let's see. **1) b;** **2) b;** **3) c;** **4) a,** down from \$719 last year, according to the National Retail Federation; **5) c;** **6) false** (Christmas and Valentine's Day generate the most sales); **7) b;** **8) b,** up from 44% last year; **9) c,** the "real" St. Nicholas was a bishop in Myra in Asia Minor; **10) b,** 31% buy toys/games, 28% buy electronics and 27% buy clothing/shoes.

Sources: usatoday.com, compete.com and howstuffworks.com

Beware of new stealth charges from banks (Enjoy a free Alliant checking account instead)

Americans are increasingly using debit cards, instead of cash, to make routine purchases. Recently, many banks planned to use this habit as a "gotcha" and start charging their customers a fee for using debit cards.

This move was prompted by a new law effective October 1, 2011, that cut the amount of money a bank can charge a business when it accepts payment with a debit card – from 44 cents a swipe to 21 cents a swipe. The result: banks will lose about \$9.4 billion annually.

When Bank of America, Wells Fargo, JPMorgan Chase and other banks announced they would try to recoup their lost revenue by charging customers \$3 to \$5 a month for using debit cards, a public outcry ensued. President Obama criticized the debit card charges as a way for banks to expand their profits at the expense of customers. And a Bank of America customer gathered more than 300,000 signatures on a petition protesting the debit card charges. In response to the backlash, Bank of America and many banks abandoned their debit card charge plan.

So, is it time to rejoice? Not yet. As Bank of America spokesperson Anne Pace put it, "We will continue to initiate actions to mitigate lost revenue where and whenever possible." Expect banks to find stealth ways to increase expenses that may fly under the radar, says Bill Hardekopf of Lowcards.com.

Likely actions banks will take, according to Bankrate.com, include:

- Inactivity fees on debit cards (so you'll have to use them at least a few times a month)
- Fees for getting paper statements
- Fees to speak to a teller
- Higher charges for bounced checks
- The elimination of debit card reward programs

Meanwhile, Alliant members, like you, can continue to enjoy one of the benefits of *The Alliant Advantage*. Alliant does not charge monthly maintenance fees for checking nor does Alliant charge a fee for our VISA Debit Card whether you use it or not.

Sources: *The Washington Post*, smartmoney.com, gobankingrates.com and businessweek.com

Earn a 2011 tax deduction by prepaying your Alliant mortgage

Want a 2011 tax deduction for a January 2012 Alliant mortgage payment? Then, we must receive your payment by Friday, December 30, 2011. The December interest charge included in the January installment may be eligible for a 2011 tax year itemized deduction.

Consult your financial advisor about potential tax savings.

office closings

Alliant will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

Day after Christmas Day

–Monday, December 26, 2011

Day after New Year's

–Monday, January 2, 2012

Convenient 24/7/365 account access

- Online banking at www.alliantcreditunion.org
- Mobile banking app for Android™ and iPhone®
- Member Contact Center at 800-328-1935
- Self Service Telephone at 800-482-5328
- Over 80,000 surcharge-free ATMs nationwide

dial direct: Alliant is there when you need us

Member Contact Center

800-328-1935

24/7 personal assistance

TDD/TTY 773-462-2300

Self Service Telephone (SST)

800-482-5328

24/7 automated account access

VISA® Debit Card

800-328-1935

VISA® Credit Cards

24/7 Member Service/
Account Info/Lost or Stolen:
866-444-8529

VISA® Gift Card

Purchase: 800-328-1935
Support Center: 866-466-2362

Mortgage Hotline

800-365-7003

Mon–Fri, 6am–7pm CT

Sat, 8am–12pm CT

Auto/Home Insurance

888-380-9287

Mon–Fri, 6am–10pm CT

Sat, 6am–8pm CT

GreenPath Debt Solutions

877-337-3399

Mon–Thur, 7am–9pm CT

Fri, 7am–6pm CT

Sat, 8am–5pm CT

Alliant Headquarters

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Chicago, IL 60666

Alliant Retirement and Investment Services

Financial Advisors are available to serve members in AZ, CA, CO, FL, HI, IL, NJ, NY, TX, VA, WA, WI. Call 800-328-1935, option "9".

Deposits/Payments

P.O. Box 60050

City of Industry, CA 91716-0050

Credit Card Payments

P.O. Box 60051

City of Industry, CA 91716

All Other Correspondence and IRA and HSA deposits

P.O. Box 66945, Chicago, IL 60666-0945

For Alliant Service Center locations, Alliant Online Banking, and product and service information, visit our website: www.alliantcreditunion.org

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