

# No Stress This Holiday Guide

by

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## Let's begin by making this declaration:

I make a commitment to do something I have never done to get something you never had! You have to do something different to get something different.

Purchasing this report is the first step to a Happy No Stress Holiday.

I WILL NOT BE STRESSED this holiday season.

I will not let my relatives annoy me (especially if the holiday dinner is in my own home).

I will not OVER SPEND; I will stick to the budgeted amount for gift giving.

## No Stress This Holiday Guide

This guide you will find:

- Complete Holiday Season checklist from guest, gifts, dinner, shopping, and decorations
- Helpful ways to reduce stress this holiday season
- Tips for creating a holiday budget.
- Sample Holiday Budget
- Helpful hints to creating a Gift Giving List.
- Gift Giving chart (in Word and Excel formats)
- Helpful hints for dinner planning
- Sample dinner menu

First decide that **YOU WILL NOT BE STRESSED** this holiday season.

Everything starts in the mind—once your mind is made up you will stick to it. 😊

This brief report will give you tips to a stress free holiday season and it will also save you time, money and frustration!

## No Stress This Holiday Season Checklist:

*Check each item off upon completion so that you can stay on target with your plan for a Stress Free Holiday Season.*

- ❑ Set a budget
- ❑ Make a list of gift recipients
- ❑ Shop for gifts (The closer to the holiday, the better the sales most of the time. 😊 Unfortunately, the larger the crowds.)
- ❑ Gifts that are being mailed should be mailed the week after Thanksgiving or no later than the first week of December (if not sooner).
- ❑ Browse magazines and clip recipes, decoration ideas.
- ❑ If you already know what you are going to give as gifts, start shopping early enough to search the internet, you may find some of your gift ideas are cheaper online (even with shipping included). This will save driving time and gas looking all over the place for a particular gift.
- ❑ Have a "Cleaning Party with your closest friends and after they help you clean order a pizza and watch your favorite movie (I love "Chick Flicks"). This will help you TREMENDASTLY with your deep cleaning projects. Your BFFs (Best Friends Forever) will more than understand you wanting the house to be spotless, during the holiday season. This will also save a lot of time.
- ❑ Check your holiday decorations, dishes, glassware for holiday entertaining. Just in case something needs to be replaced ;)
- ❑ Create a holiday menu.
- ❑ Do your major grocery shopping before Thanksgiving or just after Thanksgiving. Avoid shopping the week of Thanksgiving its always a "Mad House". Shopping at the grocery just after Thanksgiving can be a "Ghost Town" because everyone is gift shopping and Thanksgiving is over! Also avoid grocery shopping on weekends unless it's early in the morning.

## No Stress This Holiday Guide

- ❑ Decorate the house with lights and other decorations the weekend after Thanksgiving (remember you want to avoid shopping on the weekends) 😊 I decorate our house December 1<sup>st</sup> not matter what day of the week it falls on and the decorations come down and stored on January 2<sup>nd</sup> not matter what day it falls on. I absolutely hate having any kind of decorations up for more than a month 😊
- ❑ Create a master list of holiday parties, events and activities and post on the refrigerator (everybody goes there some time during the day)!
- ❑ Create a list for sending holiday cards. Use Avery labels 5160 (they are 30per page and look wonderful mailing envelopes.
- ❑ Send holiday cards out as early as possible. Everyone remembers the very first holiday card they receive.
- ❑ Place orders for food (i.e. Party trays, specialty foods) at the minimum of two weeks in advance; remember its holiday season and everyone will be ordering.
- ❑ Prepare an outline for your holiday entertaining—no one likes a boring party.
- ❑ Prepare as much food as you can in advance and put in freezer.
- ❑ Shop for your (and your family's) holiday outfits as early as possible. You don't want to forget this important feature!!!!
- ❑ Get PLENTY of rest the day you are entertaining---remember No Stress This Holiday Season!
- ❑ Remember to K.I.S.S.

**Keep  
It  
Simple  
Sensible**

Enjoy your happy, healthy and No Stress holiday season

God Bless

Rowena... 😊

## Christmas Planning Starts Early

We've all seen the touching commercials, the Christmas movies guaranteed to bring a lump to your throat. We've been captured by the beauty in snow covered Christmas scenes, we've gawked at Christmas displays and felt that funny little catch in our hearts as we ponder what our friends and family mean to us in the season of giving.

As a result of all the glitz and sparkles, all the perfect Christmas scenes and shows, we develop an unrealistic picture of what Christmas should be and how it should be celebrated.

Did you know that the Christmas holidays have also been called the season of stress? One of the major causes of Christmas stress is not planning the holiday in advance so that when the day draws closer, you feel caught off guard.

Year after year, we swear we're going to get an earlier start, we're going to plan ahead and yet each year, Christmas is the same frantic holiday complete with a breakneck pace of buying, wrapping, cooking, and parties all guaranteed to overextend our time and nerves.

For the kind of holiday you really desire to have, it takes a lot of planning for each aspect of Christmas. From choosing the gifts (and getting them wrapped) to all of the delicious meals, and the work related events, no wonder it can get stressful! Add church gatherings and special services and it's enough to make even the jolliest person wish Christmas would hurry up and just pass.

If you're dreading the overwhelming tasks ahead of you this holiday season, don't despair. You can have the kind of Christmas you want without raising your blood pressure and without getting so tired you feel like you just can't function. You need a game plan to map out the holiday step by step and I can help you with that game plan.

## ***Christmas Is One of the Most Stressful Times of the Year***

You would think with the beauty of this holiday that it would be a time of reflection, a time to sit in front of a crackling fire and drink hot cocoa and snuggle beneath a thick, fluffy throw - but that's usually the scene on a Christmas card rather than reality.

Reality is we're the ones behind the scene dragging in the firewood, lighting the fire, shopping for the cocoa ingredients, unpacking the Christmas throws from the attic, airing them out, giving them a wash...well, you get the picture.

We're busy enough already and life becomes even more hectic than usual when the holidays arrive. Thanks to all of the business, we tend to overexert ourselves and the *ho ho ho* can quickly become *bah humbug!*

With all of the activities that center around the Christmas holiday, you need a plan to keep your stress level down (as well as keep your sanity intact). You may still be working at your day job, dealing with childcare issues now that the kids are on holiday break and fretting about getting the house cleaned for upcoming relatives as well as provide them with meals.

## No Stress This Holiday Guide

Because the Christmas holiday encompasses so many different aspects, you need a plan that will deal with each element individually so that they work together as a whole to give you a great holiday season day after day.

The season is almost upon us (can you believe how fast the year went by?) so you can't put off planning another day. You need to get started right now. Make a list of what really must be done in order of importance and have a second column for what you'd like to get done but can live without if you don't get around to it.

### ***Get Your Christmas Shopping Done Early***

Every year, it seems the circle of people we know and buy gifts for increases. But you don't have to rush around in the crowds and spend hours choosing individual gifts for each person on your list.

Buy the same item for multiple people, especially if they're not in the same social circle. You can give the same gift to your elementary child's teacher as you do your high school teen's teacher.

You can buy the same gifts for people in your place of employment as you do your spouse's. Some great gifts to buy in larger quantities include gourmet food boxes. The ones containing cheeses, meats and crackers make excellent 'thinking of you' Christmas gifts as do the food boxes with coffees and jellies.

You can buy decorative tins (no wrapping needed) and fill them with an assortment of hard candies. Just make sure you don't put peppermint in the mix because it flavors other candies.

You can also purchase new Christmas ornaments commemorating the year as gifts. Bookstore certificates are always a hit since most people love to read and you can order this right from home without getting out into the crowds.

If you know what your friends or acquaintances do as a hobby or a group of special items they like to collect, you can pick those up well before the holidays. If you choose to go with a personal touch and shop and send out gifts, don't waste your valuable time standing in line for half an hour to an hour at the post office.

Never go during a lunch break or right before closing. This increases your wait time. Go early in the morning or a couple of hours after lunch break. Better yet, don't go to the post office at all. Have it come to you instead.

Right from the comfort of your own home, you can buy shipping material (you can even get some supplies free), print out the postage and arrange a pickup from your home and the pickup is done at no charge to you. If you shop online and ship online, not only do you save time and beat the shipping crowd stress, but you gain time you can use in other ways to celebrate Christmas.

The number one tip to remember when it comes to gift buying is not to wait until you *have* to get it done. Begin right now. Shopping early not only takes the stress off by giving you more time, but it helps financially because you're not forking over large sums of money (or putting it on your credit card) all at once and paying for last minute expensive shipping.

Make a list of everyone you feel you should buy a gift for. Beside each name, jot down an idea of something you know they like or might like. Starting today, begin to pick some of those items up.

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Some family members are notoriously hard to buy for and instead of dealing with the question of what to get them, ask them to give you a suggestions list. Numbering from one to ten, have them write down what they'd like for Christmas in order of importance to them. This idea works well with teenagers.

Have a shopping deadline in mind. One way to beat the stress is to have a goal to be finished with all of the prep work for Christmas meals and shopping by Thanksgiving. It can be done if you start now.

### **Don't Wait Until the Last Minute to Plan Your Christmas Menus**

Nothing can frazzle us more than trying to rush around cooking against the clock. That frazzle factor goes up tremendously if we forget something because we didn't plan until the last minute. There's a way to avoid the frazzle factor.

Figure out ahead of time when all of the parties, church gatherings, special meals and work related celebrations are going to be held. Take a large calendar - the desktop ones work well for this - and in the large blocks, write down the events by their due dates and the foods you'll need for each event.

Then once you have everything written down, you'll know at a glance where you need to be, when and what items you're bringing. Purchase all needed food items at the beginning of the month so that you can have them on hand. The best time to buy ham or turkey for Christmas meals is at the same time you pick up your Thanksgiving meat.

Unfortunately, some hosts only give a two week notice that an event is going to take place, but you can still work within that timeline. Two weeks before the event, purchase all of the foods you'll need.

Pick out what outfit you'll wear (right down to the accessories), make sure the outfit has either been picked up from the dry cleaner or you drop it off as soon as you know about the party.

If you have to bring a home baked item, bake it now and freeze it. In airtight freezer containers, foods can keep safely (and taste delicious) for months prior to use. The trick with baking goods is that you can take one day out of a weekend and bake enough goods to last the entire Christmas season.

You can bake a batch of cookies or candies all at once for every party. You can use store bought items to save the time it takes to bake, but if you do this, make sure you remove them from their original packaging and freeze them so they'll keep, too. The night before the event, simply thaw out the amount of treats you'll need, slip them into a large, decorative Christmas bag and you're on your way.

Most foods for any party - whether work or personal or church related - can be prepared well ahead of time and frozen until needed. Stress comes our way when we put off preparing the dish or treat and then scramble the night before the event (or worse the day of) to get everything ready.

For church events, don't forget if you're bringing food that has to be kept refrigerated to make sure access to the kitchen will be available and that there will be room for your dish - otherwise you might need to plan a different recipe.

When preparing food for any event, including your own Christmas Eve or Christmas Day meal, you'll want to start first with a guest list so that you can determine the amount of food you'll need.

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Decide who will be joining you and whether they're adults or children because you can figure in less food consumption for children. Categorize your holiday meal according to the course - the main meats and side items and of course, the desserts.

The best rule of thumb to remember when buying meat for guests is to figure a half a pound of meat for each adult and a quarter of a pound for each child. Make as many side dishes as you can one to two days in advance of the Christmas Eve meal.

The reason most people get overloaded with cooking for the holidays is because they try to make the entire meal either the night before or the same day and then they're too worn out to enjoy the company or the festivities. So plan ahead and don't be shy about asking for help in the kitchen from family members!

### ***Christmas Decorations Can Be Spread Out Over Time***

Tradition, for most people, involves putting up the Christmas tree and all of the indoor and outdoor decorations either right after or within a week of Thanksgiving - but there's a better way for those who feel overwhelmed. The best way to decorate inside or outside your home for the holidays is to do it a piece at a time, a room at a time, a yard display at a time.

Don't start in your kitchen, dining or living room. Those are considered to be the rooms where the majority of decorating takes place. Begin in another room instead. If you change bed linens and quilts to match your holidays, do it by the thirty-day rule.

Thirty days before the actual holiday, change all linens, quilts, and decorative pillows. That way, you get to enjoy the holiday flair. It's often the expectation of the holiday that gives us the greatest sense of excitement as well as the actual day.

Change the little decorations, the flowers, the floor rugs, etc. Replace any everyday candles with holiday colored and holiday scented ones. Within a day or two, decorate the bathrooms.

Hang holiday towels and rugs, change over any nightlights, and hang holiday themed shower curtains. Remove and store any regular counter and wall decorations and replace them with your holiday ones. Replace bath rugs with holiday ones.

Once the bathrooms are done, take a break and then start on the kitchen. In the kitchen, put out any holiday cookie containers, change over any oven mitts or towel sets and if you switch curtains, do that as well. Put out the holiday stove burner covers and wash any holiday place settings - including tablecloths, runners, and place mats.

The next day in the dining room, make room for your holiday decorations. Take off any everyday chair pads and backs and replace them with the ones you have in holiday reds or greens. Cover the table with the holiday runner or tablecloth.

Take a day off and then do the living room. Set up the tree, hang the decorations and wrap the base with the skirt or decorative cloth you use. Hang the stockings on the fireplace.

## No Stress This Holiday Guide

The next day, set out any ornamental villages. Put the decorative pillows on the sofa. Change over the ordinary lampshades for a red, green, or gold one. Set the Christmas decorations on end tables. Some people display a bowl of pinecones or a bit of greenery such as silk holly leaves and berries. Never use real berries where small children can reach them.

When you're ready to get started on the outside, do the roof lights and decorations first. That's usually the biggest job and this way, you'll get it out of the way first. The next day, string any bushes or trees with your choice of Christmas lights. If you use more than one yard display, work on one or two displays a day until you get them all set up.

Lastly, hang a wreath on or by the door and you're all done! Since it's not Christmas yet, this should leave you plenty of time to relax and just enjoy the season and the decorations you've created to instill a sense of seasonal warmth to your home.

### ***Remember the Meaning of Christmas and Enjoy Your Planning Efforts!***

It's so easy to want that gorgeous, spectacular Christmas because we chase perfection. It's human to want to put your best foot forward but believe it or not, it's not always rewarding and it doesn't always give you a sense of fulfillment.

Sometimes, we can get so caught up in all the planning and all of the activities that we forget the entire meaning of Christmas. The season is not about getting the perfect gift or wrapping it to look like a work of art. It's not about having a meal so delicious it'll go down in family history.

Christmas is a time for each of us to understand the special days we have with the people who mean the most to us. It's a celebration of Christ and what this life is all about. During the holidays, we get a chance to make the most of those special days.

Everyone is so busy working during the year, and this is a time we can step back and reconnect with friends and loved ones. We get to relax and laugh and reminisce. We get to celebrate life together and hand down traditions from one generation to the next.

It's important for children to see the dynamics of a family unit - the way we laugh together, love together, the way we cherish those special holidays. Remember that your children won't be as impressed with the beautiful wreath as they will if you take time to sit down and play a holiday game with them.

The meaning of Christmas is the way we give to one another, the way we take the time to appreciate all that we have in life and focus on the good in one another. Christmas is about reaching out to our circle and beyond.

It's about slowing down, taking a deep breath and holding fast to each and every special moment that comes our way. It's about letting the good within us spill over into the lives of others.

Celebrate this Christmas season by slowing down and taking time to enjoy it. Planning ahead is going to ease you into the holidays so that they're stress-free and more enjoyable than ever before!

# Creating a Holiday Budget

**DO NOT GO INTO DEBT HOLIDAY SHOPPING!!!!**

## Tips For Creating A Holiday Budget:

*These are tips to help you create your Holiday Budget. A sample budget is attached at the end of this report.*

- ❖ Add up all of last year's holiday bills so that you will know how much you usually spend. Some categories to look at include: gifts, Christmas cards(and postage), gift wrap and bows, clothing for parties, decorations (including the tree), travel costs and holiday food.
- ❖ Decide whether the total that you spent last year is acceptable to spend this year. If your family has experienced a pay cut or layoffs, you may want to cut back on the budget.
- ❖ Decide what to eliminate from last year's budget. For example, it is quite likely that you already have enough Christmas decorations and gift wrap. Resist the urge to buy more until you have used what you have. Also consider going to a Dollar Store. they have awesome holiday gift wrap.
- ❖ Decide what areas to spend less on. One category that can easily be cut back is holiday food. Use coupons this year or buy food well in advance of the holidays and freeze or store it. Another area to reduce spending in is clothing. Resist the urge to buy new clothing for parties when you probably already have many outfits that are suitable.
- ❖ Write out a new list of spending categories for this year and place a dollar amount next to each category.
- ❖ Make a list of every person that you need to purchase a gift for. Ask yourself if there are any people that you can eliminate from the list. Also consider purchasing less expensive gifts for coworkers or neighbors. Better yet, give homemade gifts or holiday snack foods. If you have a large family, this is the perfect year to suggest holding a drawing so that everyone only buys one gift. Due to the economy, many people will be more receptive to this idea even if they haven't been in the past.

## Creating A Gift Giving List.

The following ideas will help you set a budget for your gift giving.

### A few things to consider:

1. If you can't afford to buy your ENTIRE (i.e. cousin, niece, nephew, aunt, uncle, grandfather, and grandmother) family a gift---then **DON'T**.
2. There are several different ways you can do to substantiate this.

### Here are a few ideas:

- Let the family know that there is a budgeted amount for gift giving this year, and to stay on course with the budget, the gift giving process will be different. So instead of buying for the entire family put all family members name in a bowl or basket and pull names. And each family member will pull a name and buy only 1 gift for the name they have pulled. Set an amount that should be spent and stick to it. This works great for large families.
- Unfortunately pulling names is almost impossible to do with the immediate family (i.e. husband, wife, son, daughter). The best way to handle the immediate family is to be totally honest and let them know that whatever they want for the holidays to write it down and they will get ONE item off their list (also have them put a star or asterisk next to the item that they really want). This process will also let you know what to buy them and save you time when shopping.
- Buy for only the adult members of your family. This works if there aren't a lot of children in the family.
- Buy for only the children of the family. This is what our family does—we have done this for years (or should I say I have done this for years). ☺
- Buy ONE family gift (the gift you buy is for the entire family).

## No Stress This Holiday Guide

Once you have set a budget write down the people you will buy a gift for and next to their name write what you are planning to buy and the amount you want to spend. This will help you stay on track with your total budgeted amount. Also write down an alternate gift and the amount just in case you can't find your original gift idea. A checklist is attached to this report for your convenience.

Here is how you can narrow your list:

- Who is your favorite relative or friend?
- Who inspires, encourage, you the most?
- Who are you the happiest to be around?

These are just suggestions to get you going with your list. The list will help you to spend *wisely* so that you are not buying a gift just because someone bought you a gift last year. If you can't afford to buy gifts for your family for friends, there is no need to feel obligated to buy that person a gift.

Don't feel pressured into buying gifts when you can't afford it (even if everyone's going to Aunt Mary's house this holiday and they will be exchanging gifts). Instead of buy a bunch of gifts, how about buying **ONLY** Aunt Mary a gift since the holiday dinner is at her house and just give everyone else a nice holiday card. You can decorate the envelope with ribbon and/or candy.

**Special Note:** Did you know that most Dollar Stores have *BEAUTIFUL* holiday cards? They are usually 12 or 24 holiday cards in a box for only a dollar!

## The Shopping ☺

You have decided on a budget for holiday gift giving.

You have completed your Holiday Gift Giving Chart!

Now you are ready to go shopping.

Here are a few tips.....

- First and foremost, make sure you get enough rest BEFORE you go shopping. There is nothing worse than going shopping tired because holiday shopping can be very exasperating in itself.
- Make sure you treat yourself to something! It could be your favorite cup of coffee (Starbucks is mine) ☺, your favorite snack (again Starbucks lemon loaf is the best)! Treating yourself makes shopping much more bearable. You can treat yourself before you begin shopping to set your pace or you can treat yourself after completing your shopping as a reward for a job well done.
- **Never**, I repeat **never** go shopping on Saturdays and Sundays in the afternoon during holiday season---that's asking for high stress levels!!! *You can never find a good place to park, everybody and their mama is out shopping---it's crazy!!!*
- If you absolutely must go shopping on Saturday and or Sunday, go as soon as the stores open. It may be crowded but it won't be as many people out shopping as it is in the afternoon.
- The best time to go shopping is when the stores FIRST open (most stores will open extra early during the holiday season). You can even get a little shopping in before you go to work. My shopping days are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesdays, and I go as soon as the stores open and there are less people (even at the peak of holiday shopping).
- Look for the sales! Most stores have a Holiday Circular check it out before you go shopping. They may have what you are looking for on sale. ☺

***Now go out and get that shopping done—and STAY on budget!***

**Month** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year** \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

No Stress This Holiday Guide

HOLIDAY TO DO LIST

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## No Stress This Holiday Guide



Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Make as many copies as you need for this list.

It may take two or three re-writes to get the list just perfect!

First Name	Last Name	Relationship	Amount	Item	Comments
Example: <b>Mary</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Friend</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Chocolate Cake</b>	<b>Makes great cakes!</b>
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					

Total number of guest \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of adults \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of children \_\_\_\_\_

# DINNER MENU PLANNER

## Meat

Name	Phone	Type	Notes:

## Vegetables

Name	Phone	Type	Notes:

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**Pasta/Starches/Salads** (mac & cheese, toss salad, potato salad)

Name	Phone	Type	Notes:	

**Dessert**

Name	Phone	Type	Notes:	

**Misc.** (ice, drinks, rolls)

Name	Phone	Type	Notes:	

# Grocery List

## Meat

- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_

## Dairy

- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
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## Produce

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## Pasta/Rice

- [ ] \_\_\_\_\_
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## Baking/Condiments

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## Breads

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## Beverages

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## Misc.

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No Stress This Holiday Season  
**Holiday Budget Sheet**

Total Holiday Budget Amount \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Holiday Cards</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Cards			
Postage			
Other			
<b>Holiday Decorations</b>			
Inside of home			
Outside of home			
Other			
<b>Holiday Dinner</b>			
Appetizers			
Main Dishes			
Sides			
Dessert			
Other			
<b>Holiday Gifts</b>			
Family			
Co-worker			
School			
Other			



# Holiday Gift Giving Chart

1. Make the necessary copies that you need of this chart (DO NOT exceed 3 pages—there are 10 names per chart and 3x10 = 30 people---that's a HUGE shopping list).
2. After you have completed your list of Gift Recipients, write their name on this chart.
3. Write the type of giving you will be purchasing (i.e. shirt, book, CD).
4. Then write an alternate gift you will purchase **ONLY** if the first choice is unavailable.
5. The notes section is for special comments (i.e. size, favorite CD, favorite author)

Gift Recipient Name	Type of gift	Cost		Alternate gift	Cost	Notes
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						
	Grand Total			Grand Total		

**\*\*Grand Total is not to EXCEED budgeted amount\*\***