



How to Survive the Holidays Financially

Print Course

Print Handouts

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How to Survive the Holidays Financially is a 60-minute course designed to help service members plan for the added expenses of holidays and special events and to develop strategies to avoid overspending and accumulating excessive debt. This course is suitable for all audiences. The money management tips in this course apply year-round to all holidays and to special occasions. Also included in this course is an optional 30-minute training on vacation planning to help learners plan for the costs associated with travel and vacations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Terminal: Upon completion of this course, learners should be able to create a holiday spending plan and develop techniques to avoid overspending and accumulating excessive debt during holidays and special events.

Enabling:

- Using *The Cost of Our Happy Holiday* worksheet, learners will calculate a holiday spending plan.
- In the *It's in the Bag* activity, learners will brainstorm ways to avoid common shopping mistakes, save on holiday purchases and identify no- or low-cost options to expensive gift giving.
- During the *Your Holiday Action Plan* activity, learners will list at least five ways they will use the tips from the course content to avoid spending more than they can afford or accumulating excessive debt.

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COURSE PREPARATION

Handouts:

- *The Cost of Our Happy Holiday*
- *Financial Planning Worksheet*
- *Holiday Poem*
- *It’s in the Bag*
- *Plan Your Trip*
- *Your Holiday Action Plan*

Materials (vary depending on activities chosen):

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Notecards
- Pens, pencils, paper
- Markers
- Calculators
- *How to Survive the Holidays Financially* PowerPoint slides

SUMMARY OF LEARNER ACTIVITIES

Holiday Spending: A set of holiday trivia and spending questions used as an opening activity to illustrate the cost of annual holidays and the need for preparing financially.

The Cost of Our Happy Holiday: Worksheet activity for learners to develop a holiday spending plan.

It's in the Bag: Brainstorming activity for learners to identify strategies to reduce holiday and special event expenses and avoid the common shopping mistakes that lead to overspending.

Your Holiday Action Plan: Review activity in which learners create an action plan for applying the information and techniques for staying within the limits of their holiday spending plan.

CONTENT OUTLINE

1. Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes)
 - a. Topic Overview
 - b. Agenda
 - c. Learner Activity: *Holiday Spending*
2. Develop a Holiday Spending Plan (20 minutes)
 - a. Basic Steps
 - b. Paying for the Holidays
 - c. Learner Activity: *The Cost of Our Happy Holiday*
 - d. Plan Ahead
 - i. Make a List
 - ii. Examine Your Holiday Priorities
 - iii. Determine Your Spending Limits
 - iv. Track Expenses
3. Smart Shopping Tips (20 minutes)
 - a. Avoiding Money Mistakes
 - b. Learner Activity: *It's in the Bag*
 - c. Plan Your Shopping
 - d. Gift Giving Options
 - e. Financial Safety
 - f. Learner Activity: *Your Holiday Action Plan*

4. Post-holiday Financial Planning (10 minutes)
 - a. Dealing with Debt
 - b. Start the Year off Right
5. Summary (5 minutes)

CONTENT MATERIAL

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The holidays are a special time of year; however, it is a time when even the most frugal individual can overspend. Think about your experiences with the holidays.

AGENDA

You may be thinking only about the winter holidays. Now consider all those other holidays, birthdays, anniversaries and special events that can be a drain on your finances throughout the year. This course will provide information to help you prepare a spending plan that accounts for these expenses, saves on costs and controls spending.



LEARNER ACTIVITY: *Holiday Spending*

Time: 5 minutes

Materials: Notecards, pens and pencils

Procedure:

Give each learner a notecard. Tell them you are going to give them one minute to write down their favorite holiday or annual event and what they estimate they spent on it last year. After a minute, ask volunteers to share their answers. Bring up the Holiday Spending slide in the course PowerPoint deck and ask the class to answer the following three questions. Note that the correct answers are animated and will appear on the slide with mouse clicks.

1. Americans spend the most money each year on the winter holidays (Thanksgiving to New Year's Day). On which holiday do Americans spend the second most? (Answer: Mother's Day. Source: <https://nrf.com/news/the-long-and-short-of-americas-consumer-holidays>)
2. Besides holidays, Americans spend the most on which annual event? (Answer: Back-to-school shopping. Source: <https://nrf.com/news/the-long-and-short-of-americas-consumer-holidays>)



3. After the winter holidays, which annual event is the largest food consumption day? (Answer: Super Bowl. Source: www.dogonews.com/2014/2/2/its-super-bowl-sunday-aka-americas-second-largest-food-consumption-day)

Next, ask learners to write on their notecard any special events that put a strain on their budget in the last year. Some examples may be: a homecoming, Super Bowl party, Fourth of July cookout, a family reunion or a major birthday or anniversary celebration. The goal is to get learners to focus on all of the major events for which they should prepare annually.

Note that you can update this activity with statistics and information from the National Retail Federation website: <https://nrf.com>.

DEVELOP A HOLIDAY SPENDING PLAN

From our activity you can see that while you should consider all holidays and special events when budgeting for the year, planning for the winter holidays is especially important. According to the National Retail Federation, the average American family can expect to spend about \$800 for the winter holidays alone. Although this course focuses on financial planning for the winter holidays, this information can be used to adjust your annual budget for all major spending events.

Before you start planning your holiday spending, review your current financial situation. Do you currently have a spending plan? Do you know how much of your income you will be able to devote to holiday expenses? If you are going to take on debt, can you afford the additional monthly payment(s) that will come with that debt?

Ideally, holiday expenses should be planned year-round. If you do not have an existing spending plan, you may wish to start there before developing your holiday plan. Having a good spending plan is one of the best gifts you can give yourself. A good spending plan can provide numerous benefits in many aspects of your life. For example, a good spending plan can help you live within your means, realize your goals, maintain a good credit history, get more for your money and achieve financial freedom.

BASIC STEPS

Trainer's note: Distribute the *Financial Planning Worksheet*. Use the worksheet to illustrate the basic steps in developing a spending plan. Explain to learners that you are providing an overview of this topic and that they may wish to take a *Developing Your Spending Plan* course for additional information. They can contact their Command Financial Specialist (CFS) or a Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) financial counselor if they need assistance in completing their spending plan.





Let us start by reviewing the basic steps involved in developing a spending plan. You can use the *Financial Planning Worksheet* to create your own spending plan.

Determine net pay: The first step in creating a spending plan is to determine your net pay, or how much money you have after taxes are deducted from your gross pay. Information needed to complete the income page on the *Financial Planning Worksheet* can be found on your Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) and/or other pay statements.

Save and invest: You can establish savings for short-term goals, such as a fund for emergency expenses and a reserve fund for special events, holidays and other annual expenses you do not pay for monthly. Page 3 of the worksheet is where you can list what you contribute to your savings account as well as your monthly investment contributions. If you have time to plan ahead, consider adding now to a savings account for your holiday expenses.

Track expenses: You cannot create a realistic spending plan if you do not know where you are spending your money each month. Because the majority of our income is spent on living expenses, it is important to plan wisely for how you will spend this money. A good exercise for determining exactly where your money is going is to track your expenses for a month. At the end of the month, total your expenses for each category. You may be surprised to see where your money goes. You can use this information to make decisions about how to plan for your living expenses each month. Tracking expenses can highlight possible areas of change.

For example: You may spend just \$2 a day on coffee or soda on your way to work. It does not seem like a lot, but that adds up to \$40 a month and \$480 a year. What else could you do with that money? Small expenses add up quickly, and small changes can have a major effect on helping you reach your goals. You can track your expenses on Pages 7 and 8 of the worksheet and list those living expenses on Page 3.

Manage debt: The next step in developing your spending plan is to measure and manage debt. Page 4 of the worksheet will allow you to calculate your total monthly debt payments and figure your debt-to-income ratio. Can you afford to take on more debt to finance your holiday expenses, or is it time to lower the amount you owe? Your debt-to-income ratio can help answer that question.

For additional information on spending plans, consider attending a *Developing Your Spending Plan* course at your local Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC). For information on credit or managing your debt, you may wish to attend a *Credit*

Management course. Your Command Financial Specialist (CFS) or an FFSC financial counselor can also help you to develop your spending plan and discuss credit and debt options.

PAYING FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Once you have developed (or reviewed) your spending plan, you will be able to determine what you can afford to spend on the holidays. Ideally, you should plan and save annually to pay for your holiday expenses. Too often, people end up paying for these expenses with credit. To avoid increasing your debt and adding interest costs to holiday purchases, try setting aside money each month to pay for holiday expenses. If you do not have enough time between now and the holidays to save all of the money you need for holiday purchases, re-evaluate what you can realistically afford to spend this year. Remember, the goal is to have saved enough to pay for holiday purchases at this time next year.



LEARNER ACTIVITY: *The Cost of Our Happy Holiday*

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: *The Cost of Our Happy Holiday* worksheet, pencils, calculators

Procedure: Distribute worksheets. Tell learners they will now get an opportunity to practice what they have learned by preparing a holiday spending plan. Explain that they should estimate costs based on what they have spent in the past. Encourage learners to think about the purchases they intend to make this year and instruct them to set an estimated limit on each category. Learners should review their spending plan at home to verify the amount that they can spend on expenses before finalizing their holiday spending plan. Allow learners several minutes to work on their spending plans.



PLAN AHEAD

Planning is the key to financial success. You likely have a reasonable estimate of your holiday expenses from the previous exercise. Now it is time to plan ahead and ensure you can cover those expenses. Planning will involve making a list of your expenses, examining holiday priorities, determining your spending limit and tracking expenses so you can adjust your budget for next year.





Make a List

We have all heard the phrase “making a list, checking it twice.” This is a good concept to adopt as part of your holiday planning. Make a list of all the people you purchased gifts for last year. Next, include any new people you will be buying for this year. Do not forget to list the extra expenses during the holidays. Although a large portion of your annual holiday budget goes to purchasing gifts, the rest is usually spent on non-gift expenses. This includes:

- Charitable contributions
- Greeting cards
- Postage and shipping
- Pictures
- Decorating
- Gift wrap
- Travel
- Entertaining
- Holiday parties
- Extra gas and food while shopping
- Child care
- Clothing
- Increased use of utilities due to decorations, increased baking, entertaining or an overnight guest

The Cost of Our Happy Holiday worksheet provides a fairly comprehensive list of these expenses, but you may want to write in any additional holiday expenses you expect this year.

SET LIMITS

Examine Your Holiday Priorities

Setting a limit for holiday spending sounds like a simple thing to do, but during the bustle of the season it can be hard to say no to buying, giving and doing. To set realistic spending limits for the holidays, start by first examining your holiday priorities to determine what is most important to you. Instead of spending your hard-earned money on something because it is a holiday tradition, make sure it is a holiday tradition that is important to you and your family. For example, if



decorating your home is what puts you in the holiday spirit and gives you joy, it is a worthwhile expense to add to your spending plan. On the other hand, if you are decorating your home because your neighbors decorate theirs, and you dislike doing it, then maybe that money is better spent on something else. Before you start setting limits, first ask yourself these questions:

- Which holiday activities do I enjoy most?
- What holiday traditions bring the most joy?
- What motivates my holiday spending?

If you find that you are spending out of habit, obligation or guilt, you may want to re-evaluate those purchases and focus your money on other expenses.

Determine Your Spending Limit

Use your list to set a limit for what you will spend on each category, or better yet, for each purchase. Once you have set limits on all of your categories or purchases, total these figures to determine your holiday spending limit: What is the maximum you will spend on holiday expenses this year? Be realistic about limits and make sure that whatever you elect to spend will not exceed what you can afford.



Track Expenses

As you pay for holiday purchases this year, track your expenses to ensure that you stay within the spending limits you set. Make a copy of your completed *The Cost of Our Happy Holiday* worksheet and take it with you when you go shopping. Keep a small notebook with you to track all of your holiday expenses. There are also apps for your smartphone that allow you to track spending. Not only will tracking expenses prevent you from going over your spending limits, it will provide the information to determine next year's holiday spending plan. You can use this information to establish a monthly allotment or transfer into your savings account for next year's holiday expenses.



SMART SHOPPING TIPS

AVOIDING MONEY MISTAKES

Have you ever regretted a holiday purchase or spent more than you planned? Have you ever done all of your holiday shopping in one expensive last-minute dash to the mall? Most of us can admit to making some costly shopping mistakes during the holiday season. Retailers spend a great deal of time and effort to get us to spend money in their stores. Advertisements, holiday decorations, sales and



the pressure of making every holiday a major event can set the stage for overspending. It is up to you to learn to avoid the sales pressures during the holidays and stick to your spending limits. Here are some tips to help you avoid making costly shopping mistakes.

Bargain Blitz

It is almost impossible to avoid the advertising offensive during the holiday season. With no lack of sales, discounts or bargains, it is easy to get caught up in the marketing hype. Is it really a bargain if it is a product or service that you do not need or will not use? And if you have to use credit to pay for these bargains, what does the interest paid add to the overall cost? This bargain blitz can entice you to make purchases that you may not be able to afford simply because they were on sale.

Excessive Gifting

Giving is one of the cornerstones of holiday tradition. Shopping for just the right gift and seeing the joy that it brings can give you a lot of pleasure. However, buying gifts for every person you know can deplete your holiday funds and often increase the balance on your credit cards. In addition to gifts, you may find that you have a hard time saying no to every request for donations or to chip in for gifts. Even though it may only be a couple of dollars here or there, it adds up quickly.



LEARNER ACTIVITY: *It's in the Bag!*

Time: 10 minutes



Materials: *It's in the Bag!* handouts, chart paper, markers

Procedure: Before this activity, label three sheets of chart paper with the following headings: prevent costly mistakes, prevent overspending, and gift-giving alternatives. Divide the class into small groups and distribute the handouts. Explain to learners that you would like to hear their ideas on ways shoppers can avoid costly mistakes during the holidays, prevent overspending and reduce holiday expenses. Tell them to brainstorm as a group and come up with as many options as possible. Give learners a couple of minutes to brainstorm and then ask each group to have one person come up and write their ideas under the appropriate heading: prevent costly mistakes, prevent overspending, gift-giving alternatives. Review responses and tie them into the following content.

Remind learners that they can get additional information on being a savvy consumer by attending a *Consumer Awareness* course.

PLAN YOUR SHOPPING



Stick to the Plan

Once you have prepared your holiday list, only shop for what you intend to buy for each person and each category. Limit trips to the mall and retail stores, and online browsing, which can tempt you to make purchases that could put you over your spending limit. In addition, plan your trips to make them as efficient as possible. You will save money by buying only what is on your list and save time by reducing the number and length of your trips. If you plan ahead for what you want to purchase and where you want to shop, you can take advantage of stores that offer layaway, which will let you pay for your purchases a little each week or each month. You can pay cash instead of using credit to make your purchases, which saves you money on interest. Last-minute shopping can be costly, so develop your plan early and stick to it.

Find the Deals

To save money on holiday purchases, do your homework first to find the best deals. Retailers all advertise sales, discounts and bargains. Comparison shopping and checking prices online are good ways to ensure that you get the best deal. Look for coupons, promotions and shopping codes, which can reduce prices even more than the advertised sales. The Internet has many coupon sites that provide information on the current promotions and discounts for most national retail stores. Many stores will allow you to purchase online and may offer free shipping as a purchase incentive. Otherwise, you can shop online and then pick up your items at the store, which can save shipping costs and shopping time.

Know Store Policies

When deciding where to make your holiday purchases, check the retailer's policy on exchanges and returns. When purchasing online, confirm shipping rates and delivery times. Shopping online can be convenient and can save you money, but not if you end up paying a large shipping fee for your purchase. Keep your receipts until after the holidays, in case you need to make exchanges or returns and to verify your bank and/or credit statements are correct.

Be sure you know the exchange and return policies for your purchases, too. Gift cards have become a popular gift-giving option. While convenient for the shopper, they are not always easy to use. Before purchasing a gift card, make sure that you read the fine print on how and where it can be used.

GIFT GIVING OPTIONS

Trainer's note: Review gift-giving alternatives from *The Cost of Our Happy Holidays* activity as you go through this part of the lesson.



If you are looking for a way to reduce expenses this holiday, consider low- or no-cost alternatives to expensive gift-giving. Sometimes the gifts that mean the most can cost the least. Be creative and look for ways to include the time and talents of your entire family in gift alternatives.

Gifts you make:

- Homemade foods are always a welcome present. Children love to decorate cookies. If you have a holiday food that is traditional in your family, introduce it to your friends.
- Give a gift you made yourself. People appreciate the time you spent in making something special. Homemade crafts are another great gift for children to give.

Giving of your time:

- Make a coupon and give it as a present, redeemable for baby sitting, time alone, etc.
- Mow or rake your neighbor's lawn.
- Spend an entire afternoon doing whatever your child wants to do.
- Run errands for an elderly family member.
- Change the oil in a friend's car.

Meaningful gifts:

- Give a small gift that has symbolic or personal meaning.
- Introduce a friend to the traditions of your family.
- Make a calendar with family photos for friends or relatives.
- Make a small donation to a charity in the name of the gift recipient.

FINANCIAL SAFETY

Be aware of potential financial safety issues year-round, but pay particular attention to safety during the holiday season, when identity thieves and unauthorized charges are more prevalent.



Safety rules include:

Protect your cards and information. Maintain control of your debit cards, credit cards, checkbook and identifying information (such as Social Security number and date of birth). Know where your cards are at all times and only carry the cards you plan to use. This protects you in two ways:

- If you lose your purse or wallet, you will know exactly what is lost.
- You will be less inclined to overspend if you do not have other financial resources at your fingertips.

Know with whom you are doing business. This is especially important when doing business online. To avoid being a victim of a scam, only give out identifying or financial information to companies or groups with whom you have initiated the contact and have verified as a legitimate business or organization. You can check for this information through the Better Business Bureau (BBB) website: www.bbb.org.

Check transactions and statements. Review all statements upon receipt to verify that all of the transactions are accurate. If you do not already have online access to your accounts, set that up now so that you can check your transactions and statements as they come in. Immediately report any missing cards or unrecognized transactions. The sooner you act, the sooner you can minimize damage.

For additional information on financial safety, you may wish to attend a *Consumer Awareness* course at your local FFSC.



LEARNER ACTIVITY: *Your Holiday Action Plan*

Time: 10 minutes



Materials: *Your Holiday Action Plan* handouts, pens, pencils

Procedure: Distribute handouts and direct learners to write down at least five things that they are going to do with the information covered in this course. Encourage them to be as specific as possible by using concrete behaviors in their action plans. For example: I will get the kids to help bake and decorate cookies for their teachers instead of buying the teachers gifts. If time allows, you can invite learners to share their ideas with the class.



POST-HOLIDAY FINANCIAL PLANNING

Trainer's note: Distribute the *Holiday Poem* handout. If time permits, have a volunteer read the *Holiday Poem* aloud to the class. The poem provides a humorous way to illustrate the consequences and repercussions of overspending during the holidays.

DEALING WITH DEBT

Have you ever spent more for the holiday season than you planned to or could afford? Has it ever taken you more than 12 months to pay off your holiday charges? If you spent more than you had planned, you may be dealing with additional debt after the holidays. Here are a few steps to help you:

- Review your spending plan and make changes so that you can afford your additional monthly debt payments.
- Try to pay down your debt faster by paying more than the minimum monthly payment.
- Attend a *Credit Management* course at your local FFSC for additional information and resources.
- If you cannot find options that will allow you to make your debt payments, see your CFS or FFSC financial counselor to review your spending plan and help you explore debt-elimination options.

START THE YEAR OFF RIGHT

Holiday financial planning continues even after the holidays end. Take the time to note which techniques and strategies were effective in helping you stick to your holiday spending plan. Start saving now for next year so that you will have the cash for your expenses and your holidays will be debt-free. Add up what you spend this year and divide that amount by 12. This is what you will need to put into a savings account each month to be ready for next year.

SUMMARY

Today we have discussed financial management tools you can use for the holidays, special events and for every season. If you need help developing your spending plan for the holidays or for any time of the year, here are resources to help:

- Command Financial Specialist (CFS)
- Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC)



SLIDE 16



SLIDE 17



SLIDE 18

- Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS)
- Your defense credit union
- Military OneSource

With a little preparation and planning, you can save time and money on holiday shopping, prevent additional debt and reduce stress. What a nice way to prepare for your “Happy Holidays!”

ADDITIONAL CONTENT: VACATION PLANNING

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Vacation Planning is a 30-minute course that provides information to help learners prepare financially for vacations in an effort to avoid over-spending and excessive debt accumulation. This course is suitable for all audiences.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Terminal: Upon completion of this course, learners should be able to prepare financially for travel or vacations to avoid over-spending and excessive debt.

Enabling:

- In the *Plan Your Trip* activity, learners will create a comprehensive list of the potential costs associated with a vacation.
- During the *Ways to Save* activity, learners will identify two vacation destinations, choose five cost-cutting options for the vacation and find one way to reduce current spending and increase savings for vacation expenses.

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COURSE PREPARATION

Handouts:

- *Financial Planning Worksheet*
- *Plan Your Trip*

Materials:

- Chart paper or whiteboard and markers
- Pens, pencils, paper
- *Vacation Planning PowerPoint slides*

SUMMARY OF LEARNER ACTIVITIES

Vacation Expenses: A brainstorming activity in which learners list common vacation expenses.

Ways to Save: Learners identify ways to cut costs and save money when traveling or taking vacations.

CONTENT OUTLINE

1. Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes)
 - a. Topic Overview

- b. Agenda
 - c. Planning Your Vacation
 - d. Learner Activity: *Vacation Expenses*
2. Vacation Expenses (5 minutes)
 - a. Transportation
 - b. Lodging
 - c. Food
 - d. Entertainment
 - e. Tips and Incidentals
 - f. Military-only Options
 3. Funding Your Vacation (10 minutes)
 - a. Your Vacation Budget
 - b. Savings
 - c. Credit
 - d. Budgeting for Future Vacations
 - e. Learner Activity: *Ways to Save*
 4. Summary (5 minutes)
 - a. Resources

CONTENT MATERIAL

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Whether you are single, have a spouse or partner or a family of five, vacations can be an enjoyable break from your normal routine. You can experience new places, do new things or simply take some time to relax. Vacations can also be costly, and if credit was used to fund your vacation, you could spend months paying off your trip.

AGENDA

So how do you indulge in those great getaways without going into debt or completely depleting your savings? Planning is your key to success. This course will help you by examining planning tips, ways to cut costs and, most importantly, discuss how to fit your vacation expenses into your existing budget.



SLIDE 1



SLIDE 2



PLANNING YOUR VACATION

Most people use one of two strategies when planning their vacation. They select their location and then set their spending limit, or they set their spending limit and then choose their location. Both are acceptable ways to plan for a vacation, because both involve preparing financially and limiting expenses. However, you may find that it is easier to stay within a set budget by letting the spending limit drive the location. A limited vacation budget may rule out some destinations.

Either way, the planning involves first knowing the costs of your preferred destination and activities. Do your research so you will know all the potential expenses associated with your chosen vacation.



LEARNER ACTIVITY: *Vacation Expenses*

Time: Five minutes

Materials:

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Paper, pens and pencils
- Clock, watch or timer

Procedure: Tell learners that they are going to make a comprehensive list of possible vacation expenses.

If you are conducting the activity as a small-group activity, first divide the class into groups. Instruct each group to brainstorm and list on a sheet of paper as many vacation expenses as possible in one minute. When time is up, ask each group to nominate a spokesperson. Have each group spokesperson read out loud the expenses on their list. Keep a master list of responses on chart paper or a whiteboard. Fill in any expenses that the class may have missed.

If you are conducting a whole-class activity, tell learners that you want to know how many vacation expenses they can name in one minute. Ask for two volunteers: one to help you record learner responses and one to be the timer. When one minute is up, go over the responses. Fill in any expenses that the class may have missed.

Responses might include:

- Airfare or other transportation costs

- Hotel or lodging expenses
- Food
- Entertainment or attraction costs
- Souvenirs
- Kennel or housesitting costs

Explain that they have just outlined the agenda for the course, because you will be discussing many of these expenses.

VACATION EXPENSES

TRANSPORTATION

Depending on your destination, getting there can be a large part of your vacation expenses. Research all of your options and the pros and cons of each. A 10-hour car trip may save you money, but if you have limited leave or vacation time, or you do not think that your family members are up to that drive, you may be willing to spend the extra money to fly. If your dates are flexible, you may be able to take advantage of special deals or off-season rates that can significantly reduce not only your transportation expenses but other expenses as well.

If you decide to fly, check for deals with airlines or through travel sites to compare flights and prices. If possible, give yourself a couple of different travel day options so you can fly during off-peak days and times. For large metropolitan areas, check the fares flying into more than one airport. And do not forget to research the cost for checked baggage for each airline.

Once at your destination, consider whether you will be renting a car, using public transportation or a complimentary shuttle service, or walking to your destination. Factor these options into your vacation budget.

LODGING

As with transportation, lodging costs will vary greatly depending on your destination and your situation. If your vacation is to a family reunion or to visit friends or family, you may have little to no lodging costs. However, if your vacation destination is to Disney World, expect lodging to be a significant portion of your overall costs. Research both travel sites and hotel websites to compare lodging costs. Most hotels offer discounted rates for AAA members and government/military affiliation.



Consider the different room types and amenities. Some amenities cost more but can reduce other trip costs. For example, if your hotel room has a mini fridge, microwave and coffee pot, you can save on food expenses. Or a suite with a sleeper sofa may be less expensive than booking two separate rooms.

FOOD

It is always fun to try new foods and restaurants on your vacation, but it can also be expensive. You will most likely want to experience and enjoy the local cuisine, so look for ways to save. First, consider booking a hotel with a complimentary breakfast. There may be little extra cost for the room, but for a family of four, free breakfast for a weeklong vacation can save you quite a lot.

Consider taking along snacks that can supplement meals or looking for a grocery store nearby to buy snacks or basic meal items. If your room has a mini-fridge, take meal leftovers back to the hotel to save or reduce the cost of a meal on another day. When dining out, ask the hotel concierge or locals for their recommendations. There are also apps which can help you find affordable restaurant options. Many tourist restaurants are overpriced for the meals you receive. If you are traveling with small children, look for restaurants where kids eat free.

ENTERTAINMENT

For some vacations, the entertainment is the location itself – for example, hanging out on the beach or hiking in the mountains. For these vacations, your entertainment costs may be a minimal portion of your budget. However, for theme parks and tourist hotspots, you may spend a great deal on park fees, entrance fees, parking, shows, etc.

If you are headed to a major theme park or resort, check well in advance for any off-season rates or discounts. Research online for package deals, but read the fine print to make sure you are getting what you pay for. Check for military specials and always ask for a military discount. Some theme parks offer deals where active-duty military get in for free or at greatly reduced prices.

For major tourist locations, look for package deals to get into several attractions at a reduced cost. You can also look for free or inexpensive activities, such as national parks, museums, city parks, street fairs, etc.

TIPS AND INCIDENTALS

Be sure to budget for incidentals during travel and at your destination. This could include tips for doormen, bellhops, taxis and wait staff as well as souvenirs. Try to

plan ahead and budget for known items. Make a list of gifts or souvenirs you want to purchase on your trip, set a maximum to spend and stick to this list and limit. Not only will you save money, it will also be less for you to pack and take home.

Also consider any costs you will incur to take care of your home, pets or car while you are on vacation. If you have to pay for kennel fees or for a housesitter, include that in your vacation spending plan.

MILITARY-ONLY OPTIONS

As service members or military family members, you have access to discounts and services available only to the military. Many of these discounts and services equal large savings for your next vacation.

Morale, Welfare and Recreation

Installation Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) centers provide base fitness and sports centers, sponsor recreation classes and operate base recreation centers, movie theaters, bowling alleys and single Sailor programs. Many MWR sites also offer equipment rentals for camping and outdoor recreation.

MWR is also responsible for the DoD Information, Tickets, and Tours (ITT) program, which provides travel information and reduced-cost tickets for tours, attractions and events. Many ITT locations also have travel agents that can help you make your travel arrangements.

Armed Forces Recreation Centers

The Armed Forces Recreation Centers (AFRC) offer affordable accommodations at some of the world's most desirable travel and vacation locations. Rates for these accommodations are usually determined by rank and offered on a first-come, first-served basis. The AFRC locations include the Shades of Green resort in Orlando, Fla., as well as resorts in Hawaii, Germany and Korea.

Armed Forces Vacation Club

The Armed Forces Vacation Club (AFVC) is a free membership club open to active-duty, Guard, Reserve and retired members of the armed forces. AFVC provides access to Space-A resort rentals worldwide for bargain prices. For more information, go to <https://www.afvclub.com>.



Military Lodging

Service members and their families can use military lodging facilities around the world. Lodging includes installation facilities as well as recreational facilities and rentals that can help you save money on your next vacation.

“Space-A” Travel

Service members and their families are also eligible to travel on military flights on a space available, or “Space-A,” basis at no or very low cost. Flights are not published online, so you have to contact the local AMC Terminal to get information about available flights. Flights and availability are unpredictable, so this is only a good option if you have great flexibility for the length and dates of travel. To travel Space-A, you will also need to be prepared financially to buy a plane ticket home or pay for additional lodging if there are flight delays or you are unable to get a return flight.

FUNDING YOUR VACATION



Trainer’s note: Distribute the *Financial Planning Worksheet*. Suggest that learners contact their CFS or an FFSC financial counselor for assistance in completing their spending plan.



YOUR VACATION BUDGET

To establish a vacation spending plan, you will first need to examine your current budget or financial situation. If you do not have a working budget or spending plan, now is the time to make one. The *Financial Planning Worksheet* is a great tool to help you account for your income, expenses, savings and debt.

Once you have a good idea of your current finances, you can start planning your vacation spending plan. First, research all of your expenses. Once you have an estimate of how much your vacation will cost, work to fit those expenses into your existing budget.

SAVINGS

How will you fund your vacation? Because most people cannot pay for an entire vacation out of their monthly income, you will need to determine where you will get the funds to pay your vacation expenses. Do you have money in your savings account that you can use for your vacation? Maybe you have already been putting money aside and have saved what you will need. If you have not already put the money aside, do you have time to save the necessary funds?

Vacations should be a time to enjoy yourself. Yet, will you enjoy yourself if you are worried about how your vacation expenses will affect your post-vacation budget?

CREDIT

Another option for funding your vacation is using credit. If you do not carry a lot of debt and can pay your credit cards off in a relatively short time period, this might be an acceptable option. However, if you do not have the money to pay for the vacation, is it likely you will not have the money to make additional debt payments? If you use credit, the vacation will end up costing you more because you will be adding interest charges to the total.

If you find that credit is the only way to afford your chosen vacation, maybe you should consider a less-expensive option. You can still take that vacation at a later time once you have the money set aside to afford it. In the meantime, consider something more affordable, one that you can pay off in a reasonable amount of time without large monthly debt payments.

BUDGETING FOR FUTURE VACATIONS

After a vacation is the best time to start planning for your next vacation. Start by doing some post-vacation analysis. What was the best part of the trip? What would you definitely spend money on again? What was not worth the money you spent? The answers to these questions will help shape how you spend money for the next vacation.

Next review your vacation spending plan. What worked and what did not? Adjust your vacation spending plan accordingly. Now start the process again by re-researching your next vacation destination and expenses. Set up your next vacation spending plan based on the adjusted plan from your previous vacation. Total your expenses so you will know how much your next trip will cost. Divide that total amount by the number of months until your next planned vacation and put that amount into a savings account each month. By the time you are ready to take your next vacation, you will have a tidy nest egg and enjoy a debt-free vacation.



LEARNER ACTIVITY: *Ways to Save*

Time: Five minutes

Materials: Notecards or paper, pens and pencils

Procedure: Distribute notecards or paper to learners. Ask them to list two vacation destinations they are considering for their next vacation. Then ask learners to list five ways they can save on their vacation from the list of tips discussed in the class. Finally, ask learners to list one thing they can reduce in their existing budget



(or in their current expenses) so that they can put money aside for that vacation. Note that these instructions will be on the Ways to Save slide in the course PowerPoint deck. Give learners three minutes to complete their lists. Ask for a couple of volunteers to share their list with the group. Encourage learners to use this list when they develop the budget and plans for their vacation.

SUMMARY

While you can certainly take a vacation without a lot of planning, it may not be a wise thing to do. Planning will help save you money, help you avoid accumulating excessive debt, reduce stress and set the stage for a fantastic getaway.

RESOURCES

Trainer's note: Distribute the *Plan Your Trip* handout. Explain that the handout has many good resources to help you plan for your next vacation.

We have covered many resources that can help you plan for your next vacation. The *Plan Your Trip* handout is a good summary of those resources. You can contact your CFS or an FFSC financial counselor for help developing your spending plan or preparing a vacation budget. You may also wish to attend additional classes at an FFSC to increase your financial knowledge and skills. Finally, Military OneSource is a great resource for information on many of the topics we discussed today.

Put your plans into action and have a wonderful vacation!



NOTES:

The Cost of Our Happy Holiday

HOLIDAY GIFTS

Record name of recipient (family members, co-workers and friends) and the cost of buying or making.

	NAME	GIFT(S)	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12.	_____	_____	_____	_____
			[]	[]

CHARITIES, DONATIONS, OFFICE COLLECTIONS

1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
			[]	[]

OTHER

1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
			[]	[]

PICTURES

Photo supplies.....	_____	_____
Printing costs.....	_____	_____
Professional photos.....	_____	_____
	[]	[]

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

	Estimate	Actual
Card.....	_____	_____
Photo inserts.....	_____	_____
Printing or reproducing letter.....	_____	_____
Long-distance calls.....	_____	_____
	[]	[]

POSTAGE AND FREIGHT

Cards:		
No. of cards _____ \$ _____/card.....	_____	_____
Packages to be sent:		
No. of pkgs. _____ \$ _____/pkg.....	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
	[]	[]

DECORATING

Christmas tree and stand.....	_____	_____
Tree decorations.....	_____	_____
Household decorations.....	_____	_____
Greenery (wreaths, garland)	_____	_____
Candles	_____	_____
Fresh and/or artificial flowers.....	_____	_____
Outdoor decorations.....	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
	[]	[]

SUBTOTAL

	Estimate	Actual
(TO BE CARRIED OVER TO OTHER SIDE)	[]	[]

GIFT WRAPPING

	Estimate	Actual
Gift boxes.....	_____	_____
Paper.....	_____	_____
Bows, tags, tape.....	_____	_____
Novelty attachments.....	_____	_____
Professional gift-wrapping		
No. of gifts _____ \$ _____/gift.....	_____	_____
Heavy paper, tubes, boxes, twine, labels, tape for packaging gifts to be sent	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

ENTERTAINING

	Estimate	Actual
Entertaining others:		
Function	_____	_____
Food cost	_____	_____
Beverage cost	_____	_____
Invitations and postage	_____	_____
Miscellaneous	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
Being entertained:		
Hostess gifts	_____	_____
Baby-sitting	_____	_____
No. of days/nights _____ \$ _____/night	_____	_____
New clothes	_____	_____
Dry cleaning	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

BAKING

	Estimate	Actual
Staples	_____	_____
Special ingredients (almonds, candied fruits, etc.)	_____	_____
Equipment—		
(cookie sheets, pans, decorating tools, etc.)	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

TRAVEL

	Estimate	Actual
Gasoline for errands, around-town trips	_____	_____
Bus, train, subway fares for errands	_____	_____
Long-distance travel: Mileage or airfare	_____	_____
Meals on the road	_____	_____
Lodging	_____	_____
Miscellaneous	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

MISCELLANEOUS

	Estimate	Actual
Meals eaten in restaurants		
No. of meals _____ \$ _____/meal	_____	_____
Seasonal albums and tapes	_____	_____
Movie, play, and concert admissions	_____	_____
Professional house cleaning	_____	_____
Professional carpet cleaning	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

SUBTOTAL

(PAGE 2)

Estimate	Actual
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

SUBTOTAL

(PAGE 1)

Estimate	Actual
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

TOTAL HOLIDAY EXPENDITURES

(PAGE 2)

Estimate	Actual
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Financial Planning Worksheet

Date _____ Rate _____
 Name _____ Age _____
 Pay Grade _____ Yrs. in Svc. _____ Date Reported/PRD (Transfer) _____
 Marital Status _____ Spouse's Name _____ Age _____
 Spouse's Place of Employment _____
 Number of Children and Ages _____
 Home Address _____
 Work Telephone _____ Home Telephone _____
 Command & Referred By (Self, CMD, NMCRS, FFSC, etc.) _____
 Amount of SGLI Elected _____ Amount of FSGLI Elected _____
 TSP Monthly Contribution _____ MGIB Monthly Contribution _____

STATEMENT OF NET WORTH

ASSETS

Cash on hand \$ _____
 Checking Accounts \$ _____
 Savings Accounts \$ _____
 Certificates of Deposit \$ _____
 Cash Value of Life Insurance \$ _____
 U.S. Savings Bonds \$ _____
 Mutual Funds/Money Market \$ _____
 Stocks/Bonds \$ _____
 College Funds \$ _____
 401(k)/403(b)/TSP \$ _____
 Other (IRAs, etc.) \$ _____
Real Estate (Market Value)
 Home \$ _____
 Rental Property \$ _____
 Other (vacation home/trailer/time share) \$ _____
Personal Property
 Vehicles/Motorcycles/Boats \$ _____
 Furniture \$ _____
 Jewelry \$ _____
 Other (collectibles, etc.) \$ _____

LIABILITIES

Signature Loans \$ _____
 Auto Loans or Leases \$ _____
 Consolidation Loans \$ _____
 Student Loans \$ _____
 NEX/AAFES (Star Card) \$ _____
 Department Store Credit Cards \$ _____
 Other Credit Cards \$ _____
 NMCRS (loan) \$ _____
 Other (friends, relatives, etc.) \$ _____
 Advance/overpayments \$ _____
Mortgages-Balances Due
 Home \$ _____
 Rental Property \$ _____
 Other (vacation home/trailer/time share) \$ _____

TOTAL ASSETS	\$ _____
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ _____
NET WORTH (Assets - Liabilities)	\$ _____

Counseling Provided By: _____
 Counselor Phone #: _____
 Appointment Date: _____ Time: _____
 Place: _____

MONTHLY INCOME

ENTITLEMENTS	ACTUAL	PROJECTED	REMARKS
* Base Pay			
Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH I or II)			
Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA)			
Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS)			
Family Separation Allowance (FSA)			
* Flight Pay/Diving Pay/Flight Deck Pay			
* Submarine Pay			
* Other Hazardous Duty Pay			
* Sea Pay			
Taxable COLA			
Other (tax exempt/allowance eg. COLA/FSSA)			
TOTAL MILITARY COMPENSATION (A)			
* Taxable pay ()			Excludes pretax ded for TSP/MGIB
DEDUCTIONS	ACTUAL	PROJECTED	REMARKS
ALLOTMENT			For/ends?
ALLOTMENT			For/ends?
ALLOTMENT			For/ends?
ALLOTMENT			For/ends?
ALLOTMENT			For/ends?
Family SGLI (for spouses)			
Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI)			
Uniform Services TSP			
MGIB			
FITW Filing Status Actual			Proj. Status:
FICA (Social Security)			Base Pay Only, Excludes MGIB
FICA (Medicare)			Base Pay Only, Excludes MGIB
State Income Tax			State Claimed:
AFRH (Armed Forces Retirement Home)			
TRICARE Dental Plan (TDP)			
Advance Payments			Ends:
Overpayments			Ends:
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS (B)	\$	\$	
CALCULATE NET INCOME	ACTUAL	PROJECTED	REMARKS
Service Member's Take-Home Pay (A-B)	\$	\$	Divide by 2 for Payday Amount
Service Member's Other Earnings (less taxes)			
Spouse's Earnings (less taxes)			
ALLOTMENT			
ALLOTMENT			
ALLOTMENT			
ALLOTMENT			
ALLOTMENT			
Family SGLI (For Spouses)			
Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI)			
Uniform Services TSP			
MGIB			
TRICARE Dental Plan (TDP)			
Advance Payments			
Overpayments			
Child Support/Alimony (received/income)			
Other Income (e.g. SSI, rental income)			
TOTAL MONTHLY NET INCOME	\$	\$	

*Note: Pay Entitlements are taxable. Allowance Entitlements are non-taxable.

MONTHLY SAVINGS AND LIVING EXPENSES

Note: Actual or Projected figures can be carried forward to spending plan.

SAVINGS		ACTUAL	PROJECTED	REMARKS
SAVINGS	Emergency Fund (1-3 months)			Monthly Contribution Amount
Goal: 10% of Net Income	Reserve Fund			
Actual	Goal-Getter Fund			
Projected	Investments/IRAs/TSP/etc.			
\$				
TOTAL SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS (10%)		\$	\$	
LIVING EXPENSES		ACTUAL	PROJECTED	REMARKS
HOUSING	Furnishings			
	Maintenance/Repairs			
	Mortgage/Rent			
	Taxes/Fees			
FOOD	Dining Out			
	Groceries			
	Lunches			Include school and work lunches
	Vending Machines			
	Meal Deductions			
UTILITIES	Cable/Satellite/Internet TV/Gaming subscriptions			
	Cellular/Phone Cards			
	Electricity			
	Internet Service			
	Natural Gas/Propane			
	Telephone			Local=\$ _____ Long Distance=\$ _____
	Water/Garbage/Sewage			
CHILD CARE	Allowances			
	Daycare			
	Support			Include other dependent care
AUTOMOBILE	Gasoline			
	Maintenance/Repairs			
	Other			
CLOTHING	Laundry/Dry Cleaning			
	Purchases (\$50 monthly per person)			
INSURANCE	Automobile			
	Health/Life			
	Homeowners/Renters			
	SGLI/FSGLI			Both service member/Family SGLI
	TRICARE Dental			
HEALTHCARE	Dental			
	Eye Care			
	Hospital/Physician			
	Prescriptions			
EDUCATION	Books			
	Fees (Other/Room & Board)			
	Tuition			
	MGIB			Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB)
CONTRIBUTIONS	Charities (CFC/NMCRS)			
	Club Dues/Association Fees			
	Religious			
LEISURE	Athletic Events/Sporting Goods			Include spectator sports
	Books/Magazines			
	Computer Products (software/hardware)			
	Movie/Music/Game Rentals or Downloads			
	DVDs & CDs			
	Entertainment			
	Lessons			Dance, music, self-defense, tutor
	Toys & Games			
	Travel/Lodging			
PERSONAL	Beauty Shop/Nails			
	Barber Shop			
	Cigarettes/Other Tobacco			
	Vending Machines			
	Liquor/Beer/Wine			ABC, package store, etc.
	Other (toiletries, supplements, etc.)			
GIFTS	Holidays			
	Birthdays/Anniversaries			
PET CARE	Food/Supplies			
	Veterinarian/Service (boarding/grooming)			
MISCELLANEOUS	ATM Fees/Stamps/etc.			
	Other			Recommend \$50-\$150 buffer
TOTAL MONTHLY LIVING EXPENSES (70%)		\$	\$	

INDEBTEDNESS 20%

CREDITOR	PURPOSE	MONTHLY PAYMENT	BALANCE	PROJECTED PAYMENT	REMARKS <small>(Mos Behind, Pd by Allotment, etc.)</small>	APR %
1. US Govt.	Advance Pay				Automatic Deduction	
2. US Govt.	Overpayments				Automatic Deduction	
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
8.						
10.						
11.						
12.						
13.						
14.						
15.						
16.						
17.						
18.						
19.						
20.						
21.						
22.						
23.						
24.						
25.						
TOTAL						

SUMMARY

	ACTUAL	PROJECTED
NET INCOME (Bottom of Page 2)		
SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS (Page 3)	-	
LIVING EXPENSES (Page 3)	-	
AMOUNT LEFT TO PAY DEBTS	=	
TOTAL MONTHLY DEBT PMTS (Page 4)	-	
SURPLUS OR DEFICIT	=	
DEBT-TO-INCOME RATIO	=	

(Total Monthly Debt Payments ÷ Net Income x 100 = Debt-to-Income Ratio)

ACTION PLAN

INCREASE INCOME

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

DECREASE LIVING EXPENSES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

DECREASE INDEBTEDNESS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

REFERRALS/RECOMMENDED TRAINING

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

SETTING YOUR GOALS (Short and Long Term)

GOAL	COST	DATE WANTED	= MONTHLY SAVINGS TO REACH GOAL
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

MONTHLY SPENDING PLAN

<input type="checkbox"/> TOTAL NET INCOME <input type="checkbox"/> TOTAL TAKE-HOME PAY	MONTH		MONTH		MONTH	
BY PAYDAY	1st	15th	1st	15th	1st	15th

*If using take-home pay amount, do not include any savings, expenses or debt payments that are deducted from pay or paid by allotment.

P = Planned Expenses A = Actual Expenses	Budgeted Amount	P	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P	A
Savings & Investments													
Housing													
Food													
Utilities													
Transportation													
Clothes													
Insurance													
Health													
Education													
Contributions													
Subscriptions													
Personal													
Entertainment													
Dependent Care													
Miscellaneous													
Creditors													
TOTALS	\$												

DAILY EXPENSES

Keep track of your daily expenses for two weeks

Keep a record of how you spend your money for the next two weeks. The secret is to record it when you spend it. Using a sticky note in your wallet or purse will help you track your expenditures. When you go for your money, make a note on your sticky (write the amount and the item). At the end of the day, transfer the recorded amounts to this record. Be sure to include bills paid, along with sodas, lunches, etc.

Remember, this is for tracking your take-home pay. Do not include allotments.

TAKE-HOME PAY FOR TWO WEEKS

Dates

DATE:		DATE:		DATE:		DATE:	
Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:
DATE:		DATE:		DATE:		DATE:	
Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:
DATE:		DATE:		DATE:		DATE:	
Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:
DATE:		DATE:		DATE:		DATE:	
Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:
DATE:		DATE:		DATE:		DATE:	
Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Take-Home Pay:	\$ _____
						Amount Spent:	\$ _____
						Balance:	\$ _____
							(+ or -)

DAILY EXPENSES

Keep track of your daily expenses for two weeks

Keep a record of how you spend your money for the next two weeks. The secret is to record it when you spend it. Using a sticky note in your wallet or purse will help you track your expenditures. When you go for your money, make a note on your sticky (write the amount and the item). At the end of the day, transfer the recorded amounts to this record. Be sure to include bills paid, along with sodas, lunches, etc.

Remember, this is for tracking your take-home pay. Do not include allotments.

TAKE-HOME PAY FOR TWO WEEKS

Dates

DATE:		DATE:		DATE:		DATE:	
Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:
DATE:		DATE:		DATE:		DATE:	
Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:
DATE:		DATE:		DATE:		DATE:	
Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:
DATE:		DATE:		DATE:		DATE:	
Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:
DATE:		DATE:		DATE:		DATE:	
Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Item:	Amount:	Take-Home Pay:	\$ _____
						Amount Spent:	\$ _____
						Balance:	\$ _____
							(+ or -)

Holiday Poem

*'Twas the day after Christmas, and all through the house,
Every creature was hurtin', including the mouse.
The toys were all broken, their batteries dead;
Santa passed out, with some ice on his head.*

*Wrapping and ribbons just covered the floor,
While upstairs the family continued to snore.
And I in my T-shirt, new Toms and jeans,
Went into the kitchen and started to clean.*

*When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the sink to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the curtains, and threw up the sash.*

*When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a little white truck, with an oversized mirror.
The driver was smiling, so lively and grand;
The patch on his jacket read "U.S. Postman."*

*With a handful of bills, he grinned like a fox,
Then quickly he stuffed them into our mailbox.
Bill after bill after bill, still they came,
Whistling and shouting he called them by name.*

*"Now Dillard's, now Penney's, on Sears and GameStop,
Here's Macy's, Home Depot, Kohl's and Walmart.
To the top of your limit, every store, every mall,
Now charge away, charge away, charge away all!"*

*He whooped and he whistled as he finished his work.
He filled up the box and then turned with a jerk.
He sprang to his truck and he drove down the road,
Driving much faster with just half a load.*

*Then I heard him exclaim with great holiday cheer,
"Enjoy what you bought ... YOU'LL BE PAYING ALL YEAR!"*



It's in the Bag

Ways to avoid costly mistakes

Plan Your Trip

TRAVEL SITES:

Travel sites offer convenient ways to find and compare different vacation and travel options. You may save money by booking transportation and lodging together, but always check the site to see whether there are any booking or research costs involved and whether changes or cancellations are allowed.

Cheap Tickets: www.cheaptickets.com/cheap-vacations

Expedia: www.expedia.com

Hotels.com: www.hotels.com

Hotwire: www.hotwire.com

KAYAK: www.kayak.com

Orbitz: www.orbitz.com

Priceline: www.priceline.com

Travelocity: www.travelocity.com

MILITARY-ONLY TRAVEL OPTIONS:

Armed Forces Recreation Centers: www.armymwr.com/travel/recreationcenters

Armed Forces Vacation Club: <https://www.afvclub.com>

Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR): www.navymwr.org

Navy Gateway Inns and Suites: <http://ngis.dodlodging.net>

Navy Getaways: <http://get.dodlodging.net>

Military Campgrounds: www.military.com/Travel/Content1/0,,military_campgrounds,00.html

Navy ITT (Information, Tickets & Travel): www.navymwr.org/itt

Space Available (Space-A) Travel: www.amc.af.mil/amctravel/index.asp

DESTINATION RESEARCH SITES:

AAA: www.aaa.com

Fodor's Travel: www.fodors.com

Frommer's: www.frommers.com

U.S. National Park Service: www.nps.gov/index.htm

SOURCES OF HELP:

Command Financial Specialist

Fleet and Family Support Center

Military OneSource: www.militaryonesource.mil or call (800) 342-9647

Your Holiday Action Plan: The Gift You Give Yourself!

As you start planning your holiday purchases, consider some of the tips and techniques from today's class and list any that you want to try.

The most important things to me and my family at the holidays:

Ways I will reduce holiday expenses:

Things I will do differently this year:

Low- or no-cost ideas I want to try this year: