

# Dayton Daily News

## Procrastinator's guide to holiday shopping

By Jaclyn Giovis

DAYTON | You waited and debated. You were going to, but you didn't. Now it's down to the wire. Time to shop 'til you drop or at least until you finish.

Seven tips for maintaining your sanity and accomplishing your task

### 1.) Don't panic.

You are not alone. According to a recent study of 1,000 shoppers, conducted by the International Council of Shopping Centers over a four-day period ending last Sunday, only about 13 percent of Americans have completed their holiday shopping and 43 percent reported being half done. Nationwide, the 10 days before Christmas are the busiest shopping days of the year.

"It's procrastinator's heaven," said Lucy Johnson, director of marketing for the Dayton Mall and the Mall at Fairfield Commons. "It's people waiting for their Christmas bonuses and their last checks."

The worst thing a last-minute shopper can do this week is panic, said Mary Lou Andre, a national corporate image consultant and personal shopping expert.

"When people go into panic mode they over-buy and that's not what the season is about," Andre said. "People don't remember volume. They remember thoughtfulness and special touches."

### 2) Do your research.

**Know the people you are buying gifts for and know what they want. Then make the purchase.**

**"Paying attention is the best gift you can give to someone," said Jennifer Rizzuto, a Miami Associate for Global Image Group, which offers consumers personal shopping expertise.**

**In addition, procrastinators should use the Internet to do pre-shopping research or make online purchases instead of fighting the crowds at traditional retail venues, retail experts say.**

**Due to the last-minute mentalities of many shoppers this year, retailers are beefing up staffing levels and shipping programs to ensure that orders arrive in time for Christmas. Many retailers plan to offer express shipping promotions this week, a 2004 Shop.org/BizRate.com study found.**

### 3) Make a list and check it twice.

Organization is key when it comes to shopping this week.

You don't want to forget anything, or anyone, for that matter — keep yourself focused by making a list of the items you need to pick up. Consider organizing your list according to which stores or venues carry more than one item on your list, experts say.

Andre also suggests separating and categorizing gifts into clear plastic bins so that you know what items you have, where they are located and can easily move items from place to place. "Divide and conquer," she said. "It's all about separating and categorizing."

4) Shop early, shop late.

Shoppers, especially those who want to avoid crowds, should take advantage of extended retail hours.

"Those can be the times when items are on the shelves and employees may help you find what you need," said Ellen Tolley, spokeswoman for the NRF. "Lines are also not as long at those times."

Locally, the Dayton Mall and Mall of Fairfield Commons hours are Monday through Thursday 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and closed on Christmas Day. See individual store retailers about their holiday hours.

#### **5) Maximize your time and money.**

**A one-stop shopping mentality might save you time and money, said Rizzuto of the Global Image Group. Big-box retailers are good options for price-conscious shoppers, she said. Department stores are nice venues for those with a disposable income, Rizzuto said.**

Consumers should be mindful that this week is a "make it or break it" time for retailers, Andre said. "There's a reason why the talking Santas are talking to you at Hallmark," she said, noting retailers are using psychology to urge consumers to spend.

Also, pay attention to store advertisements and special holiday promotions, experts say. Throughout the holiday season, discount, department store and specialty retailers have featured cost-saving promotions and buyer incentives. Sales are likely to continue as retailers make their final push to move inventory before the Christmas holiday.

6) Expect traffic, chaotic parking lots and lines at the cash register.

'Tis the season, so be patient and polite. All of this will be over by next week.

7) Have fun.

Get it done. Procrastinators revel in the aftermath of completing their task.

Top sales categories, hot items, availability

Entertainment and media has taken the top sales category, therefore some newly released items may be hard to find. About 42.1 percent of the surveyed consumers

were most likely to buy books, CDs, DVDs, videos or video games this holiday, according to a consumer study released by the National Retail Federation last week.

Electronic gifts and gadgets also have been hot sales items. Many local electronics stores already have sold out of selected items.

Other popular sales categories are clothing and accessories (41.7 percent); and toys (34.6 percent), the NRF study found. Last week, Dayton area retailers and mall managers reported strong inventories and shelves looked well-stocked. But selections likely have thinned over the weekend and retailers expected strong sales as the week's shopping frenzy continues.

The NRF reported that only 22.7 percent of consumers purchased gift cards or gift certificates, however the trade organization still expects gift cards to be one of the most popular last-minute purchases.

Gift giving made easy

Consider themed gift packages or gift cards.

Pick a theme or personal area of interest and package personal items with gift cards/certificates. Gift cards are great for the hard-to-buy for people on your list.

Presentation counts.

Use gift bags with tissue paper for a no-fuss way to make gifts look appealing, or stick to a common color theme on gift wrapping paper and dressings. This will make the process simple and cost effective. Consider gift wrapping services.

Be prepared.

Candies and nuts, gourmet food and wine, and other small items may be worth having on hand for last minute hostess gifts or holiday favors.

Contact Jaclyn Giovis at 225-2348.

DaytonDailyNews.com: [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Rated with ICRA](#)

Copyright ©2004 Cox Ohio Publishing, Dayton, Ohio, USA. All rights reserved.