



Consumer Federation of America

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 23, 2012

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S-T-R-E-T-C-H YOUR HOLIDAY DOLLARS

Consumer Federation of America Offers Tips for Getting the Most for Your Money and Helping Others This Holiday Season

Washington, D.C. -- Smart consumers always want to get the most for their money and in tough economic times such as these that's more important than ever. Consumer Federation of America offers these tips on how to stretch your dollars as far possible this holiday season and how to help others with your gifts.

- **Spend only what you can afford.** It's not how expensive gifts are that matters – it's the thought that counts. Don't borrow money for your holiday spending (borrowing includes putting charges on our credit card that you can't pay in full when you get the next bill). Make a budget and stick to it.
- **Map it out.** Avoid wasting gas on multiple trips by planning your shopping as efficiently as possible. If you can park and walk to several shops in the same area, you'll save money and get exercise as an added benefit.
- **Take advantage of shopping by phone and online.** You'll save gas and you may find some good deals. But it's wise to comparison shop, and pay attention to shipping costs, which can eat into your savings. Look for free shipping.
- **Don't lose your money to scams.** If you see a popular item advertised for much less than the regular price, be suspicious—it could be a danger sign of fraud. Do business with companies you know and trust. If you're gift shopping on online auction sites, be sure that they provide buyer protection in case you don't get what you paid for. And steer clear of offers by email or through social networking sites from unfamiliar sellers – they could be scammers who just want to take your money and run.
- **Make it or bake it.** Are you renowned for your cookies, cakes or pies, or for the spaghetti sauce that you make from your grandmother's recipe? Do you know how to build a birdhouse, knit a warm hat, or make marmalade? Handmade gifts may save you money and mean more to the recipients. Preserves or food items that can be frozen for later use may be especially welcome given the glut of food that is usually around during the holidays.
- **Give gifts that save people money.** How about a gift certificate for the hairdresser or barber that the person goes to? The grocery store where the person shops? The local gas station? You can't go wrong with gifts that help defray people's every day expenses.

- **Buy “pre-owned.”** Used appliances, furniture, books and records, and clothing can save you money and be just as good as new. But before you buy used appliances or children’s items, check for recalls with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Go to www.saferproducts.gov or call 800-638-2772, TTY 301-595-7054. And be aware that used goods may not be returnable; check the seller’s return policy.
- **Give gifts that help other people.** What to give to the person who has everything? Make a gift in the person’s name to a worthy charity. Consider groups in the person’s area that help to feed the hungry or provide shelter, or that serve people around the country in times of disaster, or organizations that are dedicated to a cause that the person supports. Information about specific charities is available from the Better Business Bureau’s Wise Giving Alliance, www.bbb.org/us/charity or 703-276-0100.

The Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 nonprofit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education.