

Eagle Lake Headlight



Holiday Gift

Guide 2006



Nine Tips For Maintaining Your Shopping Sanity

The "most wonderful time of the year" can quickly become the most dreaded for shoppers who cringe at the idea of making holiday purchases.

As throngs of people descend on area malls and stores, you may feel like fleeing in the opposite direction. Before giving up on the possibility of shopping sanely, consider these ways to keep your head while checking everyone off your holiday gift list.

1. Comfort is key. The right "uniform" can ensure your comfort and make shopping more enjoyable. Depending upon where you live, it could be rather chilly when heading out.

But avoid wearing a bulky winter coat. Stores crammed with shoppers can be stuffy and hot, and you'll end up having to lug around your coat because you'll be too warm to wear it.

Consider layering shirts so that you can remove layers until you've reached your comfort level. Plus, shirts or even a zipper-front fleece jacket are much less cumbersome than a down coat.

Also, head to the stores in comfortable footwear. Athletic shoes are probably your best bet.

If you plan to shop during a

work lunch hour or after business hours, bring a change of clothes and shoes so you'll be able to do so comfortably.

2. Take breaks. If you've planned a day for marathon shopping, be sure to schedule breaks into that plan.

These can include an hourlong lunch, a coffee break or catching a flick at the in-house mall theater. A simple pit stop now and again can rev up energy levels and get you motivated to continue shopping.

3. Don't shop on an empty stomach. Few people can concentrate when they're starving, so make sure to have a bite to eat before setting out.

Pack along some granola bars or other portable snacks in case hunger pangs strike while in the

throes of shopping.

Remember to rehydrate as well with bottled water or juice. Those climate-controlled stores can dry out your body rather quickly.

4. Avoid peak shop times. If you want to contend with smaller crowds, try rearranging your schedule so you can shop during meal-times, early in the morning or late at night, when there may be fewer people at the stores.

Waiting until the kids get out of school or for primetime weekend shopping may rattle your nerves. Bring lunch to work and shop on your lunch hour to also sidestep some of the crowds. The same can

be said for grocery shopping and running other errands.

5. Split up the shopping tasks. Families can divide the shopping list among their members and shop separately, then meet up at a designated time. This will allow everyone to spend fewer hours in the stores.

6. Leave the baby at home. As cute as they can be, infants and toddlers can easily become overwhelmed and irritable when holiday shopping.

Rather than contend with a major meltdown that requires you exit the store pronto, hire a sitter or ask a family member to care for the kids so you can shop uninterrupted and unburdened by sippy cups, strollers and temper tantrums.

7. Take a road trip. If shops close

to your house are always overcrowded, map out stores or outlets that are off the beaten track.

Then make a day of taking a scenic drive and shopping at places that aren't as busy. Who knows ... you may make it an annual tradition that you enjoy.

8. Invest in a shopping cart. Anything with wheels will do, whether a metal shopping cart or a canvas one.

Look for carts that fold up to fit in your trunk, which are often sold in discount or houseware stores. This simple tool can prove invaluable for toting around all of the items you've purchased.

It also frees up your hands for browsing through racks and displays. What's the alternative? Tired arms overburdened with shopping bags.

9. Shop early. Though you may hate to hear it, shopping several months prior to the holidays can save you a lot of headaches. Pick up items as you come across them on your travels.

If you're really ambitious, you can wrap them, too. Come December, you'll have a gift for everyone and an entire month for rest and relaxation. Make this a shopping resolution for next year.



happy shopping!