

Get Organized and Take Stock Before You Buy	Vali G. Heist, Author and Certified Professional Organizer®
Copyright December 2015	www.thecluttercrew.com

It's that time of year when houses fill with holiday cheer in the form of holiday gifts, decorations and accoutrements that make the season festive. Many of my clients are downsizing or trying to maintain a clutter-free home and they take a different view of the holidays as they work to simplify their lives. I'm not talking about anti-capitalism; but shopping, buying and gift-giving requires a paradigm shift to stay focused, organized and on the right track. Some of you may want to move toward those same goals so let's break it down:

Take stock:

1. Visit the gift closet/drawer (most of us have one) before you start buying new gifts. Assign each gift to a person on your list. If you have a lot of extras you haven't used for years, donate them to agencies looking for unwrapped gifts.
2. Take your list and shop early to avoid expensive last-minute purchases and to stay within budget.
3. Look in your food pantry and take stock of what's there before you buy any new food. If there are items you aren't going to use and aren't expired, give them to the Food Pantry in your area.
4. Unearth the paper products, decorations, and holiday cards you bought last year at the end of the season before you buy anything new.
5. Peruse your clothing closet for holiday wear that you still adore and haven't worn more than once. Maybe an accessory such as jewelry, shoes or a scarf will give it that needed update.



Thoughtful gift-giving:

1. Gift of time: An experience to enjoy with someone else where you lose track of time!
2. One-of-a-kind gifts: Handmade gifts (yours or others).
3. Gift of creativity: If the receiver of your gift wants to get back to creativity in his or her life (i.e. painting, scrapbooking, writing, woodworking, photography, knitting, etc.), give a gift card to a favorite craft/hobby store.
4. Gift for the future: For the child who has everything, contributions to a college fund could be the answer.
5. Gift of nothing: If people tell you they don't want a gift; listen to them. In other words, give them what they prefer, not what you prefer to give them.

Planning for the future:

1. Take all donations to your favorite charity before December 31 to get your tax receipt for 2015 taxes.
2. Go through your children's toys and clothes before they receive new items and take them with you when you donate the items.
3. Keep large future monetary purchases in mind (i.e. house down payment, new car, etc.) to keep spending in check.
4. If you are paying off credit cards or saving for retirement, don't forget those commitments at the holidays; stay on track.

If you'd like more ways to simplify the holidays or more ideas for clutter-free gift-giving, go to my website at www.thecluttercrew.com.

It can be challenge to disregard the commercialism and retail frenzy of the holidays, but if we become discriminating and savvy shoppers, the New Year won't bring new bills, but rather new memories to look forward to! Happy Holidays from The Clutter Crew!

Clutter Quote: *"If you want to live a happy life tie it to a goal, not to people or objects."* Albert Einstein