



SEATTLE@HOME

December 12, 2008

## Get Organized: Stop the stress Grinch from stealing Christmas

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AS IF YOU'RE not already busy enough during the holidays, now you may be trying to squeeze in countless extra activities -- shopping (if you can find a parking spot), wrapping those purchases, entertaining, attending parties, sending out cards, decorating the house, putting up outside lights, holiday baking ... did I miss anything?

If you're feeling overwhelmed, perhaps you need to see what you can eliminate from your list. Letting something drop can go a long way in helping you feel less pressured to get it all done.

However, if your list is still longer than you'd like, here are some ideas to make the next couple of weeks merry and bright:

**Delegate** -- Who said you need to do it all? If you find that your holiday greetings have not yet been addressed, give one of your children the list and let them address the cards and affix the stamps and return-address labels. Surely the receiver of your holiday wishes will smile when they see the envelope and wish they had been clever enough to delegate this task to their children.

**Christmas in January or June** -- Start a new tradition and send out New Year's cards or "Christmas in June" cards. Your warm wishes surely will stand out when it's the only card they receive mixed in with the stack of bills from holiday spending. Think of the benefits to "Christmas in June" cards -- you can purchase them at after-Christmas sales, so you save at least 50 percent and you have six months to write them.

**Click 'n' ship** -- Set up a free account at [usps.com](http://usps.com), which lets you ship packages from the comfort of your home or office. I've used this service for years and it saves me the time of driving to the post office and standing in line. On average, this saves me an hour each time I need to ship something. It may save you even more time now, when the lines are longer than usual.

**Mass attack on clutter** -- Get your family to help you eliminate clutter in your home. No reason everyone can't pitch in, pick up and get organized before Santa's arrival. If faced with resistance, let them know that Santa banned clutter this year and isn't visiting homes where he could accidentally trip over something. After all, you're going to need to free up some space for the new treasures Santa will leave behind. A quick 30-minute declutter by each family member can help you prepare your home for the arrival of guests, including the one wearing the red suit.

**Don't get caught empty-handed** -- Always keep a few extra gifts on hand -- just in case. You never know when you're going to need a last-minute gift, and gift cards are great for this. I like to find gifts that work for just about any age, such as iTunes or movie tickets -- you can't go wrong there. Of course there are other favorites that people love to receive, such as Starbucks, Nordstrom or Target cards. Even a gas or grocery store gift card can go a long way this year. Wrap them in advance in festive giftwrap that works year-round. This way, if you don't need

them during the holidays, you don't need to rewrap. Make a list of what you've wrapped, including the denominations, and keep the list with the gifts for reference when the need arises.

**Trim the tree and the list --** My family is large and the adults agreed that this year we didn't need to spend a lot of time shopping for gifts that none of us really need. We'd rather spend the time shopping for the younger nieces and nephews. For the grown-ups we set a spending limit on a single gift that would be appropriate for any adult, and then we'll hold a gift exchange. Since I love to shop for Christmas, it will certainly be different this year. But I feel good knowing that we will all have more time to spend with family and a new niece rather than spending it circling parking lots and waiting in long lines.

**What can I bring? --** Let those four words be music to your ears. Instead of pretending you're Wonder Woman or Superman and can do it all, let others help. When someone asks, "What can I bring?" be ready with a list of things they can bring or do for you.

Finally, whatever you decide you have time for this year, don't forget to make time for yourself and enjoy these last couple of weeks. Next year, you can do things differently so you won't feel overwhelmed. My recommendation would be to start as early as possible so you don't have to squeeze everything in between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

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