

# THE HOLIDAY *Planning Guide*

Simple ways to enjoy a  
meaningful holiday season  
within your means





**THE HOLIDAYS** are for focusing on moments that matter. But for many Americans, financial stress can get in the way. SunTrust wants to help you make small changes that can make a big difference in reducing that stress and moving toward financial confidence.

In this guide, you'll find tips for spending and saving wisely so you can feel confident in your ability to stick to your budget and enjoy the holiday season. You'll see how other Americans are shopping, traveling, celebrating and giving in ways that make the holidays cost less (but mean more).

By following this guide, you'll learn how to think differently, spend thoughtfully and enjoy a meaningful holiday within your means.

Let's get started.

*Think differently, spend thoughtfully and enjoy a meaningful holiday within your means.*







More than 55% of holiday shoppers will splurge on themselves and/or others for non-gift items, and will spend an average of \$131.59, up from \$126.37 last year

78% of Americans use smartphones for holiday shopping

The first Monday in December is when the most online holiday party invitations are sent

## Preseason

Taking a few simple steps early on can help ease financial stress this holiday season. And one of the easiest ways to cut back on holiday stress is to plan ahead.

Start by **setting a budget** for holiday spending. We've got a great one you can use. Think about what's on your to-do list, from planning parties to surprising friends and family

with the perfect gifts, and let yourself get excited. Customize your budget with line items for those expenses so you can make a plan for your holiday funds.

Next, make saving simple by opening a dedicated savings account and setting an automatic transfer to put a little away for the holidays with

every paycheck. **Starting to save earlier** means you can start shopping earlier, too—and spread out your spending.

By investing in a little prep time at the beginning of the holiday season, you can spend less time worrying about how you'll get it all done and more time celebrating with family and friends.

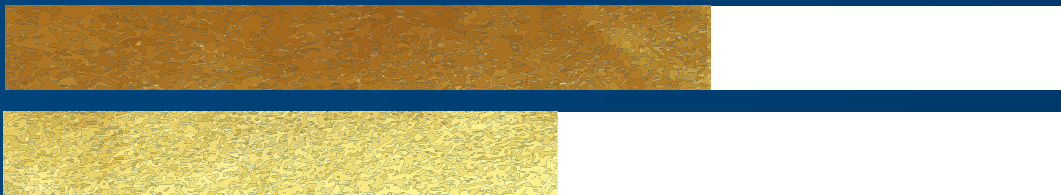
## Starting Early to Save Big

A majority of Americans do their holiday buying before December—for good reason, too:



- **29%** of consumers will shop before Black Friday week
- **26%** of consumers will shop during Black Friday week
- **45%** of consumers will shop after Black Friday and through Dec. 31
- **16%** of households plan to shop after Dec. 25


## The Luxury of Time



More than **61%** of holiday shoppers shop early to spread out their budget, while **48%** shop early to avoid the November and December crowds

*By investing in a little prep time at the beginning of the holiday season, you can spend less time worrying about how you'll get it all done.*





90% of kids say some of their favorite memories come from family vacations

Nearly 1 in 3 Americans travel over the holidays, and more than 100 million travel 50+ miles from home

## Travel

Whether it's hitting the road to Grandma's house or hopping a flight for a fun getaway, travel is a big part of holiday plans. And for many that means spending on everything from luggage fees to tolls.

If you're flying, find **smart ways to save** by shopping around for airfare and knowing the best days to book.

If your travel plans include a road trip, make sure your vehicle is road-worthy by investing in regular

maintenance. Car owners who keep up with regular maintenance (an estimated \$1,000 investment) stand to save as much as \$8,000 compared to those who skip the maintenance and find themselves footing the bill for repairs.

### When Should I Book?

**\$137**

Average increase in U.S. airfare prices for Thanksgiving flights from those purchased before Labor Day to those purchased the week of November 25

**\$46**

Average savings earned by booking a hotel for Thanksgiving in November rather than booking in August

**Sunday**

Best day of the week to find low airfares

**57**

Number of days before a flight travelers should book their tickets for the best price

### When Should I Fly?



**62%**

of Americans depart for Thanksgiving the Tuesday or Wednesday before



**88%**

of Americans return for Thanksgiving travel on flights the Saturday or Sunday after

**Tip:** Depart on the Monday before Thanksgiving and return on the Friday after to beat the crowds

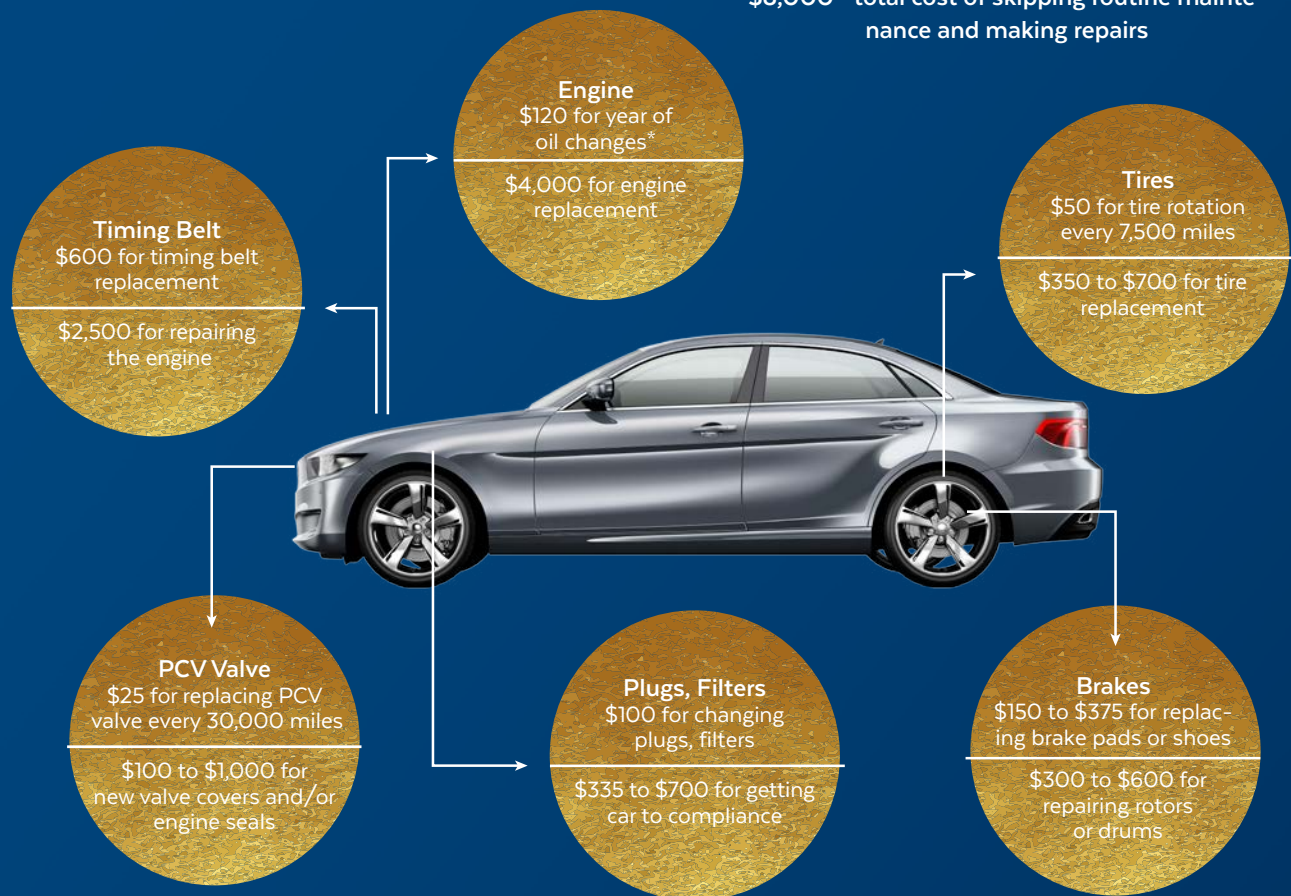
## Is Your Car Road-Trip Ready?

Driving is the most popular type of travel for holiday travelers, with more than 90% of individuals making the trip over the river and through the woods to Grandma's by car.

**\$1,000—total cost of regular maintenance**

**VS.**

**\$8,000—total cost of skipping routine maintenance and making repairs**



*\*Tip: Change your oil every 5,000 miles or every four months, whichever comes first*

*If your travel plans include a road trip, make sure your vehicle is road-worthy by investing in regular maintenance.*





Americans spend around **\$2.4 billion** to stock up on turkey, stuffing, potatoes and other Thanksgiving staple items

#### Let's Talk Turkey

A home-cooked, turkey-based holiday dinner with all the trimmings costs more than the average weeknight meal, but it's still a bargain compared to take-out and sit-down dining.

The average American family stands to **save nearly \$35 per person** by making and eating the big holiday meal at home.

Average per-person cost:

**\$3.13**

Regular home-cooked meal

**\$4.90**

Home-cooked Thanksgiving meal

**\$12.28**

Eating out, in general

**\$39.40**

Sit-down restaurant dinner

## The Big Meal

Togetherness around the dinner table is a hallmark of the holidays and a great way to connect with loved ones. If you're hosting the big meal this year, keep an eye out for clever ways to trim the fat from your holiday spending.

Switching to energy-efficient holiday lights can make a

difference. So can eating the main meal at home and asking attendees to bring a dish to share. When you cut out fluff, like finding the right centerpiece or forking over a fortune on sterling silver napkin rings, you not only save money, you also shift your focus back to the celebration—and the people there to enjoy it with you.

*Togetherness around the dinner table is a hallmark of the holidays.*



50% of Americans plan to shop on Thanksgiving. 43% will shop online, and 40% will shop in the store.

Shoppers spent more than \$620 billion during the 2015 holiday shopping season

# Shopping

Americans are gearing up to give this holiday season, and in some cases that means spending more than they can afford. Some

shoppers expect to carry debt for holiday purchases into the new year and even think they'll be late to pay a regular bill because of it. **Get ahead**

**of shopping struggles** by starting with a strategy. Use your gift budget to plan your purchases before hitting the store or shopping online.

## Shipping by the Numbers

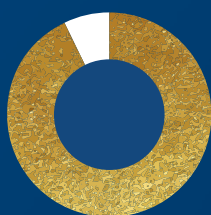
Online shopping deals can be undercut by the expense of last-minute shipping fees. Here's how the shipping numbers stacked up in 2014:



More than 60% of retailers provided standard free shipping during the 2015 holiday season

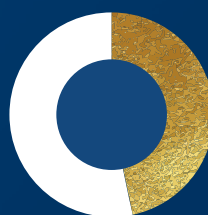


1 in 3 shoppers say speed of delivery is a reason they choose to buy from marketplaces



83%

of shoppers say standard free shipping would make them extremely likely to make a purchase



46%

46% of shoppers abandon a shopping cart due to a shipping time that's too long or not provided



Pay attention to sales and know which deal days are the best for your big purchases: Thanksgiving and Black Friday are great for electronics, but if you're shopping for shoes and sweaters, Cyber Monday's deals could save you even more.

If you find the perfect gift for a loved one, splurge knowingly by adjusting your spending limits for others on your list. Finally, keep in mind it's the thought that counts, not the price tag. There are lots of ways to show you care without breaking the bank.

## Holiday Deal Days

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Mark your calendar for these deal days to make shopping more efficient and less expensive:



### Thanksgiving

(aka Gray Thursday)

Best Items to Buy: iPads/Tablets, HDTVs, Gaming Items

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### Black Friday

Best Items to Buy: Headphones, Speakers, Electronic Storage, iPhones, Garden Items

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### Small Business Saturday

Many cities promote their deals on community websites and through local news channels, so stay tuned for this year's deals.

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### Cyber Monday

Best Items to Buy: Clothing and Shoes\* and Beauty

\*Tip: On average, there are about 50 percent more clothing and shoe deals on Cyber Monday than on Thanksgiving or Black Friday

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### Giving Tuesday

Last year, Americans donated more than \$116 million on Giving Tuesday.

*Keep in mind it's the thought that counts, not the price tag. There are lots of ways to show you care without breaking the bank.*

To determine your guest list, divide the total square footage of your home's hosting space by five feet of personal space per guest

31% of people say that they normally attend multiple holiday parties each year

With 10 strands of lights, you could save almost \$40 a month by switching from incandescent to LED bulbs

## Get Togethers

Nearly a third of Americans attend multiple gatherings each holiday season. Between office parties, Secret Santa swaps and New Year's Eve soirées, the costs can add up, but there are ways to be festive and thrifty.

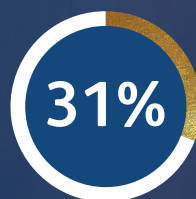
Hosting a party? Move the start time to an after-dinner hour and you can serve snacks instead of a sit-down meal. Swap fancy cocktails for a big batch of punch. You'll save on expenses and won't have to man the bar, meaning more time for mingling with your guests.

### 'Tis the Season to Party

A sizeable chunk of holiday spending goes toward get-togethers:



of people attend one gathering each holiday season



of people attend multiple gatherings each holiday season



of partygoers will buy a gift for the party's host

**\$35**

The average amount spent on a host gift

### Leave the Sweets at Home

26% of gifts received by hosts are chocolates, cookies or candies




But only 8% of hosts say they would most like to receive sweets



More than half of partygoers arrive with a gift for the host and spend \$35 on average picking it up on the way. For the next

get-together you attend, skip the usual flowers, food and wine in favor of a DIY gift your host and your wallet will appreciate.





Spending less, saving more is the third most popular New Year's resolution

Enjoying life to the fullest is the fourth

Feeling thankful can improve your ability to save money by 12 percent

## Postseason

When the frenzy of the holidays finally quiets down, take a moment to review your finances and feel thankful for all the ways you've shopped smart, saved big and set yourself up for a bright financial future.

As December 31 approaches, think about **financial resolutions** you want to make for the coming year. Want to

pay off debt? Empower yourself by setting a tangible target and putting a plan in writing to achieve it. Saving up to finally take that trip abroad? Open a travel fund savings account and make a plan to contribute so you can get there sooner.

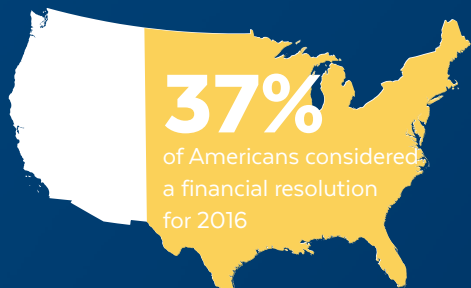
People who set specific financial goals—like transferring \$50 from

every paycheck to savings—are 10 times more likely to achieve them. By building on the good financial habits you created this holiday season, you can set yourself up to keep living meaningfully within your means year-round.

*Happy holidays from SunTrust!*

## Make Financial Resolutions You Can Keep

The start of the new year is a great time to improve your financial well-being. Here's how Americans commit to improvement:



Among people who make financial resolutions:

54%

hope to save more

16%

hope to pay off debt

19%

hope to spend less

People who make specific New Year's resolutions (i.e., "I will transfer \$50 from every paycheck into savings") are **10 times more likely** to keep them than those who don't

## Preseason

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### Image

"30th anniversary edition: 2015 holiday survey," October 2015, Deloitte  
"Retailers In For a Very Digital Holiday Season, According to NRF Survey," Oct. 20, 2015, National Retail Federation  
"10 Stats About Holiday Parties that Brands Should Know," Punchbowl.com

### Infographic

"2015 Holiday Outlook Millennials matter; experience is essential," October 2015, PwC  
"Retailers In For a Very Digital Holiday Season, According to NRF Survey," Oct. 20, 2015, National Retail Federation  
"30th anniversary edition: 2015 holiday survey," October 2015, Deloitte

## Travel

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### Image

"AAA: Number of Holiday Travelers Expected to Top 100 Million for the First Time," 2015, American Automobile Association  
"Holiday Travel Sucks But You Do It Anyway," Dec. 18, 2012, CarlsInsurance.org

### Infographic

"Save on Thanksgiving Travel: Book Flights Early, Hotels Late," Aug. 13, 2014, Hipmunk.com  
"ARC Finds Lowest-Priced Domestic Air Tickets Bought 8 Weeks Before Flight, 24 Weeks Before International Flights," Oct. 22, 2014, Airlines Reporting Corporation

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"AAA: Number of Holiday Travelers Expected to Top 100 Million for the First Time," 2015, American Automobile Association  
"True cost of not maintaining your car," March 2014, Bankrate

## The Big Meal

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"Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Thanksgiving, With Leftovers," Nov. 27, 2014, U.S. News & World Report

### Infographic

"Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four Levels, U.S. Average, August 2014," September 2014, United States Department of Agriculture  
"Cost of Classic Thanksgiving Dinner Down for 2013," November 2013, American Farm Bureau Federation  
"U.S. Supermarket Experience Survey," 2011, The Retail Feedback Group  
"The New York City Dining Scene Thrives, Reaching Pre-Recession Levels," October 2014, Zagat

## Shopping

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"Top retail holiday trends: Holiday shopping survey results 2015," 2015, Accenture  
"Holiday Headquarters," 2015, National Retail Federation

### Infographic

"Thanksgiving vs. Black Friday vs. Cyber Monday: What to Buy Each Day," Nov. 23, 2015, DealNews  
"116.7 Million Reasons to Celebrate #GivingTuesday," Dec. 2, 2015, The Case Foundation

### Infographic

"2015 Holiday Outlook Millennials matter; experience is essential," October 2015, PwC  
"UPS Pulse of the Online Shopper," June 2016, UPS

## Get-Togethers

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"Holiday Lighting Efficiency," About.com  
"Mother's Day Floral Statistics," AboutFlowers  
"Holiday Entertaining Survey: Food, Gift Exchanges Most Popular at Parties," Dec. 3, 2013, Ask Your Target Market  
Freakin' Fabulous by Clinton Kelly, published Oct. 7, 2008

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"Holiday Entertaining Survey: Food, Gift Exchanges Most Popular at Parties," Dec. 3, 2013, Ask Your Target Market  
"New Holiday Shopping Survey Reveals Consumers Plan to Shop Later and Party into the New Year," Dec. 14, 2009, American Express Company

## Postseason

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"Auld Lang Syne: Success Predictors, Change Processes, and Self-Reported Outcomes of New Year's Resolvers and Nonresolvers," Journal of Clinical Psychology  
"Gratitude: A Tool for Reducing Economic Impatience," March 5, 2014, Psychological Science

### Infographic

"Auld Lang Syne: Success Predictors, Change Processes, and Self-Reported Outcomes of New Year's Resolvers and Nonresolvers," Journal of Clinical Psychology  
"Fact Sheet: The Fidelity Investments® 2016 New Year Financial Resolutions Study," 2016, Fidelity Investments