

Master Gift List

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Introductory:

How often do you go shopping for a gift with just a vague idea of what the person would like? While wandering around the stores you hope something will catch your eye that is the perfect gift for that person. I'm sure you have done this. I know I have.

But when you have a bunch of people to buy gifts for at Christmas/Hanukkah time you could end up spending a lot of time shopping and still not find the right gifts.

That's where your Master Gift List comes in. Not only will you have a list of the people you want to buy gifts for, you'll have researched ideas and costs before you step foot in a store. If you shop mainly online your research will do double duty and save even more time. Of course, you'll miss out on all the glitter and festive atmosphere of the stores but to each her own.

Creating a Master Gift list also helps with setting a budget and staying within that budget. That way when January comes the charge card bills aren't higher than expected.

Formats for the list:

There are different formats you can choose to make your list on (see below). Pick the one that you are most comfortable with. When creating or filling out the form just follow the steps below in the instruction section. They will make sure you are writing down all the information you need.

- Spread sheet. If you are good with using this kind of software, then create your gift list on one.
- Type up a list in a word processing document.
- Hand write a list on notebook paper in your planner.
- Find a preprinted downloadable form online. Print it out.

Location for list:

So, where do you put this list? There are several options depending on your family and how you are using your general planner.

General Planner:

- A copy of the list can be put in the section for Christmas or Hanukkah, whichever holiday you are buying gifts for.
- If your family is helping you with the planning, decorating, cleaning, and cooking for the holiday and will be accessing the planner to help you with these things you may not want the gift list in there. See the following options on where to keep it.

On the Computer:

- You can keep a copy of the list on the computer. Update the list as needed. You still will want to have a copy of the list with you when you go shopping. You can either print it out and keep it in your purse or wallet. Or if you have a smart phone you can email yourself a copy to an email address you have access to on your phone.

In Your File Drawer:

- If you are worried that your children will find you list, you can keep a copy of it in a file folder in the drawer. Put it in a folder you know they would never look in. Just don't forget which folder it's in when you want to get it.

Step by Step Instructions to create list:

Step 1 - Gift recipients:

You'll want to separate your gift recipients into four different categories. The number of people you have in each category will determine how many different sheets of paper, pages on a Word document, sections on a spreadsheet, or preprinted forms you'll need. Start by listing the names of everyone you think you either want to give a gift to or feel obligated to give a gift. Put them in one of the four categories listed below.

- Family
- Friends

- Co-workers
- Service People (hairstylist, child's teacher, postman, etc.)

Step 2 - Create a budget:

First figure out the total amount of money you are able or willing to spend on all the gifts this year. Then write down next to each person's name how much you would like to spend on them. Once you have put down a number for everyone you will add it all up to get a total.

Step 3 - Revising the list:

If the total amount in Step 2 is over your budget, then you have three options on how to get at least close to your projected budget.

- You can reduce the dollar amount you plan to spend on some or all the people on your list.
- You can cut some of the people off the list entirely.
- You can do a combination of the above.

Step 4 - Gift Options:

Now that you know the budget for each person it's time to come up with a list of gift options. Next to each name write/type several gift ideas you think that person would like and are in the predetermined price range. Doing research online will help give you ideas and prices. You can also look through paper catalogs or sales brochures you get in the mail to get ideas and prices if they have them.

Just because you write down a gift idea doesn't mean you are committing to buy that item. This part of the Master Gift list is only a guideline to help you find something for each individual while at the same time keeping your budget under control.

Step 5 - Gifts that need mailing or shipping:

Make a note of the people you will need to mail or ship a gift to. If you are buying a large or hard to pack gift, consider shopping online or at stores where they will pack the

item for you. Don't forget to figure packing and shipping costs in your budget. Those costs can add up if you have a lot of gifts to send. You may need to reduce the amount you plan to spend on the gift itself.

Plan on buying the gifts that need shipping by the beginning of December. This time frame goes for both the gifts you buy locally and the ones online. You will save a lot of money on shipping costs when you mail them early because you can use the standard rate. If you wait until the week before Christmas, you'll have to pay premium prices to get the gifts there on time.

Step 6 - Shopping and updating list:

Take a copy of this master gift list with you to the stores. Every time you finish a shopping trip take a few minutes to update the original list (paper or computer) and the copy you take to the store.

- Check off the names on the store copy that you have bought gifts for.
- Update the computer list with the gift you bought and price paid. This will help with keeping track of expenses and what has already been bought.

Step 7 - Save the list for next year:

After the holidays are over you'll want to briefly go over the list again. Make notes of any changes you made with the gift options or people you added or deleted from the list. Keep this list in a place where you can access it all year long. A document on the computer works great.

During the year if you see something that would make a great gift for someone on your list make a note of it next to their name in the Master Gift List. That will give you a head start for next year.

This Master Gift List will help put the fun back in shopping. Instead of feeling overwhelmed about what to buy you'll be organized and in control of the gift shopping. Instead of being surprised when the bills come in January you'll be prepared because you controlled what you spent with a planned budget.