Signs You’re Overspending During the Holidays
Give yourself the greatest gift this holiday season by putting away those credit cards and staying debt-free. Excessive spending leaves too many people at the start the new year overloaded in debt. Watch for these warning signs before you get in over your head:

1. **You don’t have a budget**
Don’t know how much you can afford to spend for the holidays? Put down that credit card and back away slowly. Take a few minutes to figure out what you can safely spend this holiday season, on everything from stamps to decorations to gifts.

2. **You don’t know what you’ve already spent**
If you don’t know how much credit you’ve already burned through, it’s time to stop and check. A good way of knowing you’re spending too much is your credit card bill is larger than expected, which probably means you’re not paying close enough attention.

3. **Your credit score is at risk**
Your credit score is influenced by the amount of available credit in your name. Put too much on your credit card, and your credit score could drop. FICO recommends using no more than 20 percent of available credit as a healthy barometer.

4. **You’ve spent more than you can pay off**
If debts are keeping you up at night or stressing you out and if you’re struggling just to make minimum card payments, then the last thing you need is one more spending hurrah before that credit card bill arrives in January.

5. **You don’t have an emergency fund**
Life is full of emergencies and they usually come with a price tag. So having a cash cushion is necessary. Make sure you have three to six months’ of readily available cash to use for emergencies.

**The best advice for safe spending this holiday season? Use cash!**
Gift Cards or “Real” Gifts?
More than half of all consumers say at least some of the presents they plan to give this year will be gift cards, according to a new national Bankrate survey.

But only 27 percent of Americans say they would prefer to receive a gift card over an actual gift during the holidays. Younger millennials ages 18-25 were the age group most likely to favor gift cards (34 percent), but they also were the group most likely to prefer a tangible gift (57 percent).

Important Notice to Travelers!
If you are traveling out of town or out of the county, please notify your credit union so a traveling alert can be placed on your debit or credit card.

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Shopping Safely Online During The Holidays
Americans will spend nearly $655 billion during the holiday season this year, with half of the purchases online.

• Before surfing the Internet, secure your personal computers by updating your security software. Computers should have anti-virus, anti-spyware, and anti-spam software, as well as a good firewall installed.
• Keep your personal information private and your password secure. Do not respond to requests to “verify” your password or credit card information unless you initiated the contact.
• Beware of “bargains” from companies with whom you are unfamiliar. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!
• Use secure websites for purchases. Look for the icon of a locked padlock at the bottom of the screen or “https” in the URL address.

The average person will spend $805 during the holidays.

The average person will travel 275 miles for Christmas.

26.3 million real trees were purchased in 2014, with 6 million trees coming from Oregon.

FedEx shipped 317 million packages between Thanksgiving and Christmas last year.

Toys and games stores increase staff on average by 38% during the holidays.

77% of people took advantage of deals for themselves last year.

U.S. retail sales during the holidays will surpass GDP of 181 countries.

33% of holiday shopping is for clothing and accessories.

Are you paying too much interest on your car loan?
Check with SCFUC to see how we can lower your monthly payment!