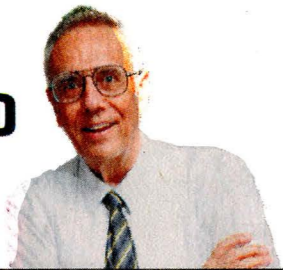


THE
LAST WORD



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The easiest way to make money may be not to spend it. And it's tax-free too.

The problem is, it's hard to do, especially when Christmas shopping has just started. There are just too many good things out there to buy!

I recruited 10 expert shoppers and asked if they had any savings tips. Surprisingly, all did, and some good ones too. Here they are.

1. Elizabeth Wong: "Don't buy what you don't need. I am often tempted to buy an extra pair of shoes. But I have 20 pairs already. Everyone I know has more shoes than they need."

"Deep inside, I know I can live without shoes that I think I can't live without!"

2. Janice Wong: "My motto is, 'She who hesitates is saved.' What I mean is I don't buy anything on impulse, especially if it costs over \$100."

"Instead, I'll go home and think about it. If I really like it, then I come back the next day and buy it."

"True, I often feel bad about missing a sale. But just like an MRT train, another one is going come soon. And the next sale might have even better deals!"

3. Joanna Tay: "My husband and I have stopped buying expensive gifts for one another. This year, we made a 'no

Be the smart shopper this Christmas

jewellery pledge'. I already have a shoebox full of it so I don't need any more.

"Besides, it is a terrible investment. You can only sell jewellery for about half of what you pay for it, and sometimes less."

"I also find it hard to know jewellery's true value. Like a \$200 necklace. Is it really worth \$200? The only thing that's obvious to most of us is that it's pretty."

4. Colleen Ng: "When buying gifts for others, there are usually high-cost and low-cost options. I go for the low-cost."

Take wine for example. Who can tell a \$20 from a \$100 bottle? You need to be an expert to taste the difference. My secret is to give gifts like not-so-expensive wine wrapped in fancy wrapping paper."

5. Neerja Bhatia: "Our family is huge. Last Christmas, I bought 36 presents for all the aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. It was too much. This year, our

QuickQuote

Shopping is to women what sports is to men.

Linda Heng, expert shopper

extended family is trying an experiment. We call it a 'gift draw'.

"We put each person's name into a box then everyone draws a name. They buy a Christmas gift for that person only."

Of course, everybody gets fewer presents but we are hoping no one will mind. It is much cheaper and saves shopping time too!"

6. Dieter Mueller: "Give people gifts that you made yourself. It doesn't need to cost much since it has a personal touch. People appreciate gifts that come from your own heart and hands."

"When I was a young boy, my



Photo: Jonathan Choo

mother used to knit a sweater for my brother and me. One Christmas, it was the only present we received. We didn't mind because we knew money was tight and our mother took many hours to make it."

7. Jennifer Lee: "We wait until after Christmas to buy gifts. There are some great sales in mid-January."

"I think the stores get a bit desperate around that time because people don't shop as much. It is a supply-and-demand thing. With less demand, the stores appreciate shoppers more."

8. Stephanie Lim: "I tell my son that Santa Claus is short of money this year because of over-spending in previous years."

"That little story seems to make him appreciate his gifts all the more."

"In fact, I tried it last year too and he became somewhat over-sensitive about spending money. Now, he has gone overboard and has filled up one piggy bank. He is working on the second."

9. R. Sathish: "Give gifts that you had to buy anyway. For example, say the spare tyre for your car was looking worn. Give a new one as a Christmas present for your wife. (That may be going too far.)"

"But it works for some gifts. I plan to give our family a new television set since we had been planning to buy one anyway. I told them how it saved money, and they liked the idea."

10. Serene Tan: "We decided to save money by giving gifts to children only and not adults. The adults get Christmas cards."

"Our other new idea is to give kids what they need, not what they want."

"This year, we are giving them books instead of computer games."

"We hope our children will read them. We think the chances are good if they don't have any computer games to play."

Dr Haverkamp is an economist and adjunct faculty member at Singapore Management University. In this weekly series, he shares simple tips on how you can make money work harder for you.