

Getting Organized for the Holidays

by [Jacquie Ross](#)

Preparing for a Stress-Free Holiday Season!

In just a few short weeks the holidays will be upon us and the stores will be beautifully lit, perfectly decorated and displaying neatly packaged gifts for us to purchase. We generally expect for retail stores to have everything we need to begin our holiday shopping several weeks before Christmas. So why not take a lesson from their books and begin your holiday preparation early? In fact, most major retail stores have their holiday shopping gifts in stock as early as September. Instead of waiting in long lines and buying gifts at the last minute, consider the alternative of being organized and prepared! With proper planning you can *enjoy* the holiday season instead of feeling stressed and overwhelmed. Here are some organization tips to help you to have a less stressful holiday season!

Gift List

- ❖ No, this is not your personal wish list for Santa! This is your gift giving list, with names and gift ideas. If you also buy for service people, such as the mail carrier, include them on the list.
- ❖ Have a budget in mind, so that you will stay on track as you shop for each gift. The holiday season is not the time to try to impress everyone with how much more you can spend each year. Avoid trying to keep up with the Joneses. The Joneses won't be paying your credit card bills in January! Be honest about how much you can afford. You'll have peace of mind and will be much happier when the holidays are over.

Jacquie's Tip: Create a holiday shopping notebook that you can refer to every year. Note down your holiday card list, gift giving list and gift ideas. After each shopping trip, make a note of what you have purchased, including the cost of each item and the recipient. It will be a great reference tool for the upcoming years.

Holiday Cards

- ❖ Write your holiday card list and then shop for holiday cards. If you prefer pre-printed cards, order them now. If you have a long list, address a few each day so that it doesn't feel overwhelming.

Jacquie's Tip: At the end of the holiday season, go shopping to take advantage of holiday cards and gift wrap at reduced prices.

Shopping

- ❖ I know you've heard it all before, but try to start your holiday shopping as early as possible. If you have a crazy schedule, then you will need to book your shopping time on the calendar like any other appointment. If you have children, consider swapping childcare with a trusted friend or neighbor, so that you can shop alone or with your partner or spouse. Also, avoid the holiday rush by shopping during the week instead of weekends.
- ❖ Consider shopping for gifts online. Online shopping has become very popular over the years due to the convenience of shopping after hours, the ability to research products and having a wide variety of products available at your fingertips. However, the same rules apply for online shopping - shop early in the season, otherwise some of the items on your list may sell out. Shopping online will not only save you time, it is also a great way to give to people out of town. It's often cheaper to have the online store ship your gift, than to mail it from the post office, particularly if it's a heavyweight or bulky item. Shopping online is also a lot less stressful! No crowds, traffic, parking or long lines!

Jacquie's Tip: Before you leave for your holiday shopping trips, make sure you have everything you need. You should have your gift giving list, clothing sizes (if applicable), wish lists and budget. Also, if you wear comfortable clothing and footwear, you will have a better shopping experience.

Holiday Entertaining and Parties

- ❖ It's time to write your guest list if you are planning to host a holiday party or open house. Shop for your invitations or make your own. Pick the party date and prior to mailing the invitations, ask your prospective guests

to hold the date. Invitations should be mailed out by mid-November for December parties. You can then plan your menu and begin thinking about preparing your home for entertaining.

- ❖ If you usually attend a number of holiday parties, plan your holiday party outfits. Decide if you need to purchase new or wear an outfit you already own.

Jacquie's Tip: If your home is cluttered, it is not too late to begin de-cluttering and organizing your rooms in time for the holidays. Today's marketplace offers an abundance of products to assist you in getting your home organized.

Gift Wrapping

- ❖ For an easy and convenient gift wrapping experience, set up a temporary holiday gift wrap station. Find a suitable and convenient space in your home that you can borrow for a couple of weeks. A dark corner in your basement is unlikely to work, because if it's not convenient or comfortable you won't use it. Your gift wrap station will include all the necessary supplies to wrap your gifts, and will remain in that space until the holidays are over.

Jacquie's Tip: Have fun during your gift wrapping sessions. Enlist family members to help. Keep plenty of supplies available, including tape, ribbons, bows, scissors etc. Enjoy your favorite holiday drink and listen to holiday music! Suddenly, it won't feel like such a chore.

Finally, for everything to run smoothly, it's important to write everything down, coordinate schedules with your family and use your calendar diligently. There are far too many things going on to try to keep it all in your head. When you are organized during the holiday season, you'll be more relaxed and ready for the big day. Have a wonderful holiday season!

Jacquie Ross is a Professional Organizer and owner of CastAway the Clutter! A member of the National Association of Professional Organizers, she teaches homeowners and small home based business owners how to reclaim their time and space. Visit CastAway the Clutter! and sign up for her [free organizing tips](#).