

## To Enjoy the Holidays, Organize and Simplify

The true meaning of the holidays is time with family and friends, and celebration of your spiritual beliefs. Keep this in mind, and each time you want to add to your “holidays to do” list, whether at home or in your business, you’ll keep better perspective.



Martha M. Brisk Floral Designs

### Simplify

Make a list of everything you WANT to do and everything your family wants to do. Now look at a calendar. Whoa ! Don’t make yourself sick over too many commitments.



Each event will be more memorable and more special if you choose fewer events; they won’t become the blur of the season. Pick and choose. Make fun out of gift wrapping, cookie making, shopping and decorating.

For your business, make a list of “MUST be done by year's end”, and what “can wait until January” or first quarter. It’s tempting to use end of year as a false deadline. But be realistic about whether something REALLY needs to get done by the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Outsource responsibilities at this busy time of year. For example, in business, if you want to send your clients a “thank you for your business” gift, but don’t have time to get it all done or don’t know what to get people, a wonderful resource to speak with is Cheryl Johnson of "Say Thank You." Cheryl consults with you about gift giving programs for your business clients. As she says, “Business will go where invited, but will remain where appreciated.” How often has someone thanked YOU for your business? Not often, I bet, but it feels great when you're acknowledged, doesn't it? Each client receives a different gift based on your relationship. *Say Thank You* pulls it altogether for you and gets it done, with unique ideas along the way. Cheryl Johnson, [saythankyou@cirelle.net](mailto:saythankyou@cirelle.net) or 603-594-0146.

Trade with neighbors. If both of you need to get to two different stores, can you swap lists and each buy what the other needs – going to one store each. Or carpool and make it more fun.

### Gift Lists – Family, Friends, Clients

For your clients, consider sending gifts in January so you stand out among the rest of the companies they do business with. Keep track of what you send from year to year.

For friends and family, keep a gifts list. Clears your head, relieves stress, ensures nobody’s forgotten, and is helpful next year. Something like this...

Who is the gift for	Ideas	Purchased	Gifts to make	Store or web site	All Done (Yes/no, and \$\$)
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On your gifts list, include a column for which stores/web sites to shop at. You'll save yourself time -- fewer stores by consolidating trips.

If you *make* cards or gifts, list them here, too, so you can combine trips to crafts stores. And it's a good reminder you need extra time to make these gifts.

Include on your list a few entries for "housewarming gifts." These are for the hosts of a holiday party, or for the last minute "oops, I forgot to buy for ..."

When you buy, update the list right away. You'll see progress and stay on top of what's left to do.

## Gift Wrapping Space



If you're like many people, the wrapping paper and supplies are in several closets and up in the attic. First step is to gather it altogether. You'll know what you have, not overbuy and find what you need quickly. Pick a permanent home for the supplies, like an old bureau.

There are products you can purchase to help stay organized - a vertical, plastic gift wrap holder; a compact, roll-away gift wrapping 'center' which folds out to be larger when set up; garment bag-style holders you hang in the closet to hold everything. (Use one container for holiday supplies; one or more for all other supplies, so you can easily find what you need.) Find these at The Container Store, Lillian Vernon or Target.



**From target.com**

When you purchase your first gift, set up a table with wrapping materials. Usually a guest room or basement room are ideal. Wrap as you buy. Or if you can't leave a table out in the open, pick one day a week and wrap everything you've bought in the past week. You'll feel like you're making a lot of progress (and you are!).

## Gift Shopping

Simplify. Limit the list. Buy only for the children. Or draw names and buy one gift. Decide to only make gifts for each other this year. Buy only for immediate family, not all the cousins.

Go shopping during the week. It's worth an afternoon off to reduce stress and to get more done in fewer hours.

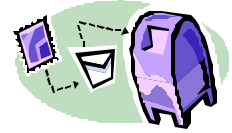


If you shop at the malls, use valet parking during the holidays. For a few dollars, you load your bundles right into the car instead of walking them all the way to the car (and isn't it always at the holidays when you forget where you parked!).

Use the internet. Some people use it to find the gift and also buy it online. Others use the internet only to find the right store, and then go to the store to purchase.

## Cards

For your clients and informal partners/colleagues, make a list of your top tier – repeat clients, largest volume, most profitable or greatest sources of referrals. Get *their* address information up to date first, so it will be ready for the gifts program.



To get your cards out on time, with minimal stress, divide your piles of cards and envelopes into groups, such as: not local/need more mailing time; needs a note (takes longer to write out); and no note. Mail them as you complete them.

Take your cards with you everywhere (in a plastic bag, along with stamps and labels). Write out cards in front of the TV, sitting at home, or waiting for an appointment.

## Entertaining

For clients or for family/friends: Before you begin planning your party, write down everything that needs to get done. Or go online and search for party planners; there are lots of free task lists available. Try this one <http://www.partybasic.com/partyplan.pdf>.

By writing it down, you'll see that things can be done in stages which can be less stressful. You won't forget as much (it's a busy season!). For your next party, you'll have a list to start with, including what you forgot to do this time, or what you wanted to do but didn't have time for. And it's easier to "share" the "to do" list.

Make the parties easy on yourself. Do a potluck meal. Or a house-to-house party, where each host provides one part of a meal. Or an open house. Or hire a personal chef.



In a recipe box or on your computer, keep a 'holidays' recipes section.

## Decorations at Home

Think about your lifestyle and how important it is to have a lot of decorations, or live evergreens or other plants.

Have a decorating party with other families or with friends.

Take out one room's bins at a time, decorate the room, return the bins to the attic, and start with the next room. It's easier to do your decorating across multiple days this way, without cluttering your house with lots of storage bins.



Martha M. Brisk  
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### **Resources Mentioned**

*Floral Designs:* Martha M. Brisk, Multi-Media Designer.

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*"Say Thank You:"* Cheryl Johnson, Relationship Marketing Consultant.

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