

The Christmas Countdown

Set timeframes for all your actions and schedule everything into your planner. This is vital, otherwise you'll end up keeping yourself busy and before you know it, all your good intentions will have fallen by the wayside and Christmas will be only a few days away.

Start Preparing for the End of the Year

You'll be able to enjoy this special time instead of stressing yourself out getting everything done right up to the last minute. So start preparing in October for the holiday season by writing down your shopping list and scheduling time each week or each day to get everything done by a specific date. By having it in writing, will help you stay on track so you can enjoy the holiday season.

Clearing Out the Clutter

An uncluttered environment enables you to think clearly, be more productive, able to focus on what you are doing, and save you time and money. You'll have more stress if you live and work in a mess, rather than in an organized work and home environment.

Christmas Countdown



COMPUTERIZE. To save you time every year, use your computer and printer to create and print your holiday card mailing labels. Once the addresses are stored in your computer, you just update the list and print every year. If you plan to e-mail your newsletters, set up a folder labeled "*Christmas Newsletter.*" You'll be saving the trees, and your friends can forward it to anyone else they know or print the newsletter out and give it to others with just a click.

AVOID THE POST OFFICE. The post office gets so busy during the holiday season. Sometimes you wait longer in line than you do in sending your package off. This can't always be avoided, because most people work during the day. So if you can't make it to the post office until Saturday, beat the long lines by getting to the post office early before the door opens so you can get in and out right away. Buy holiday stamps early, or purchase them by mail, or you can go to the Internet and buy stamps at websites such as www.stamps.com. Mail your holiday packages out early, or have them sent out directly by the store you purchased them from.

HOLIDAY CARD LOG. Keep track of all holiday cards sent and received with a holiday card log. This is an enormous help for future holidays. Go to www.microsoft.com and type in the *Search* box the word "templates." Click on the link and you have thousands of templates to choose from.

HOLIDAY CARD LIST. Take the time to review and update your holiday card list. Be sure to include your family and friends, plus any business organizations, volunteers, church members, civic organizations, paper carrier, delivery people, etc. This is particularly important if you have an e-mail list, as sometimes people change their e-mail addresses,

and you want to make sure they're accurate. So, contact everyone by phone, if necessary, and ask them if they've changed their e-mail address.

OVERALL BUDGET. Open a holiday or separate savings account by having a specific amount withdrawn from your checking account into your savings account every month. This way, you will have enough for Christmas, so you won't have a credit card bill that you'll be paying off for the next year. It's important that you put a limit on the amount that you're going to spend on each person. Remember, this is the time for giving, but not so much, that you have nothing left to give yourself. But more importantly, it's the most important time of the year where people actually find the time to spend with their family and friends, no matter how busy they are. *That is a priceless gift in itself.*

NONHOLIDAY RESPONSIBILITIES. If you plan a routine for the holiday season every year, you'll be able to get more done in less time, so the holiday season won't take over your entire life. Come up with a written plan for ensuring that you will balance your time between work, family, shopping, cleaning etc., so you don't wear yourself out, and not able to enjoy the holiday season.

REASSESS AND BE FLEXIBLE. This is important to be flexible during the holiday season. Don't stress out so much that you get sick because there's so much to do. Start early and do as much as you can by shopping online. It will save you time, money and gas.

Don't schedule every minute of your day as this will reduce your flexibility and increase your stress level. Let's say, for instance, December 11th comes around, and you were scheduled to go shopping. For instance, if your best friend called and asked you out to lunch. Go ahead and treat yourself, because you work hard, and schedule another time with yourself to go shopping. The stores always have longer hours during the holiday season, but your friend has limited time to see you. Probably one of the best gifts you could give your friend, is your time so take the time and enjoy!