

## SIMPLICITY AT CHRISTMAS

Does the idea of holiday shopping place you in “panic” mode each November? Why not try one or more of the ideas below to simplify your holiday this year? Remember, the Christmas season is a time for warmth, fellowship, shared experiences and hospitality. Don’t give into stress. Instead, savor each moment with friends and family. After all, five years from now, no one will remember what present you gave them but they will remember baking cookies and singing around the fire.

- Draw names with close friends and family. Make or buy a gift for the one name you draw.
- Trim a few names from your gift list by talking with people you think might welcome an invitation not to exchange gifts.
- Buy one family gift per household instead of a gift for each separate individual. Make the gift something that will foster family time such as a puzzle.
- Discontinue buying gifts for adults and give to the young children only.
- Give simple homemade gifts or gifts of service such as, “I’ll watch your kids for one night while you go on a date with you husband.”
- Give inexpensive gifts and let your presentation turn them into elegant ones. For example, homemade cookies in an open weave basket threaded with a red ribbon.
- Make your gift a tradition and give the same thing every year. For example, a yearly renewal of a favorite magazine.
- Shop by catalog or internet. You really can do all your shopping in a matter of hours in the comfort of your own home.
- Give the gift of time – coupon for a monthly backrub, a trip to the zoo or a house cleaning.
- Think unique. For example, make a batch of bran muffins. Give the recipe and six fresh muffins baked in a tin. “Wrap” the package with clear cellophane and top it off with a pretty bow.
- Cover a shoe box with wrapping paper to use as a gift box. Fill with stationery items such as paper clips, marking pens, memo pads, note cards and stamps. Any mom or grandparent would love that.
- Give a dated ornament that reflects someone’s special interests or personality.
- Give a gift certificate to a favorite restaurant.
- Roll up a dollar bill and insert it into a balloon. Mail it along with your Christmas cards to a family with small children. Include instructions to blow it up and then pop it.
- Invite someone who is alone to celebrate decorating the tree or a meal. Send them home with the leftovers.