

Holiday Checklist

counting down

LAST WEEK OF NOVEMBER	FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Write out gift lists, and organize addresses, preferably on a computer or a PDA to help with neatness and efficiency.○ Buy stamps, cards, and wrapping supplies.○ Plan a “secret Santa” or other gift swap with friends to limit your total number of purchases.○ Sign, address, and send holiday cards.○ Spend a few hours shopping on weekdays or after work, when stores are calmer than they are on weekends.○ Ship gifts early to guarantee on-time delivery; save a trip to the post office by scheduling an at-home pickup at www.usps.com.○ Carry your address book or PDA as you shop, since some stores will ship items directly.○ Firm up travel plans; when the time comes, check in and print boarding passes at home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Plan holiday menus; order a turkey, a ham, or other specialty foods.○ Shop online; you can do so at any time of day, and it will save you the time of wrapping and shipping gifts.○ Unpack decorations, and inspect them for damaged ornaments and burned-out bulbs.○ Take an inventory of baking staples, and replace those that are running low.○ Set up a wrapping station in a low-traffic area of your home; wrap gifts as you buy them.○ Hand out gifts and gratuities to service people.○ Buy bulk gifts, such as a case of wine or multiple candles, to offer to neighbors, acquaintances, and party hosts.○ Drop off a few festive outfits at a dry cleaner.
SECOND WEEK OF DECEMBER	THIRD WEEK OF DECEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Complete half of the house cleaning, starting with infrequently used areas, such as the guest room or formal dining area.○ Put up exterior decorations; greenery lasts longer outdoors.○ Polish silver, and hand-wash stemware.○ Make and freeze cookie dough to bake as you need treats over the coming days.○ Have a family outing to pick out the tree and other greenery; you can also buy a tree online and have it delivered.○ Put up interior decorations.○ Trim the tree toward the end of the week; you’ll have time to enjoy it, and it will stay fresh.○ Prepare chicken stock for use in gravy and other recipes; freeze the stock in jumbo muffin tins, and keep the rounds in freezer bags.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Launder and iron table linens, then roll them around wrapping-paper tubes for short-term, wrinkle-free storage.○ Shop for food, again at an off-hour (some stores and markets expand their hours; consider having your purchases delivered).○ Clean the rest of the house, this time focusing on frequently used rooms.○ Finish up any last-minute wrapping.○ Take stock of and clean serving dishes and utensils if you’re hosting a holiday meal.○ Make seating plans, and write out place cards; set the table.○ Prepare make-ahead side dishes; cranberry sauce, for example, can be taken care of early.○ Get an early-morning jump on the main meal to allow more time for socializing.