

# How (and why) to start your Christmas shopping now



Planning ahead is not one of my natural fortés. Though being responsible for two small human beings and having a spouse whose motto is “*semper paratus*” has helped over the years, my head often remains very much “in the moment.” This can be great for handling deadline pressure and multitasking, but it can be not so great for handling other things.

So imagine my semi-panic when I read in early October that because of bottlenecks all within the global supply chain, it is recommended that consumers get a head start on Christmas shopping this year. Items will be marked up, delayed in transit or simply unavailable, the article said, and it would be prudent to plan ahead. Super.

Given how I started this column, you might have already surmised this, but I am your classic last-minute Christmas shopper. I like the hustle and bustle of rushing from store to store to find the perfect item, then staying up late into the night wrapping packages while watching Christmas movies or listening to music. This late-in-the-game approach (at least I tell myself) also helps me better observe the season of Advent before transitioning completely into “crazy Christmas mode.”

This year, though, the world is different, so I’m resolving to be different, too. I’m going to plan ahead. And, while maybe it shouldn’t have taken supply-chain concerns to push me to this point, I have decided to seize the day. My goal this year is to have Christmas shopping done by the first Sunday of Advent, and I am very much looking forward to seeing how this will change my approach and appreciation of the season.

Searching online for support and advice for my “fall resolution,” I found just what I needed to help me in my journey: a step-by-step guide called the “Christmas Shopping Challenge.” Called (and I completely love this) “Shop ’til you drop on your knees and pray,” the [guide from catholicsistas.com](http://catholicsistas.com) begins six Sundays before Advent with writing down all the names of people to whom we plan to give gifts – big or little. It also recommends setting a spending limit and figuring out just where we’re going to store all the packages as they start rolling in. The next week, with five Sundays to go until Advent, we are to gather and update addresses, brainstorm gift ideas and surf the web for deals.

Four Sundays before Advent, the site recommends having all necessary supplies (tape, gift bags, etc) and blocking off time to shop, be it online or in the store. By the next week, three Sundays before Advent, the fun begins. Final decisions should be made on who is getting what, and then it’s time to go shopping. (The guide also recommends checking Advent candles at this time so we’ll be ready to light that wreath in three weeks. Genius.)

As the gifts begin piling up, two Sundays before Advent, it’s time to label gifts and finish shopping. A week before Sunday, on the feast of Christ the King, all presents should be wrapped and stored. Now is the time to get out our Advent decor, and prepare our hearts for the season – a season that, for the first time ever, won’t be at least somewhat consumed with gift hunting and wrapping.

I am intrigued to see how this will play out, and I am praying this approach will lead to a quieter, calmer and more focused season of preparation for the coming of Our Lord. In the meantime, I would love to hear from you. Are you an early Christmas shopper? How has it affected your Advent season? What have you learned? Email me at [feedback@osv.com](mailto:feedback@osv.com).

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