



It feels like everything is getting more and more expensive and with Christmas coming up, I'm really worried about how I'll manage. My partner and I would love to treat our kids but we're keen to avoid huge debts. Do you have any advice?

Christmas can be costly for many of us and we know lots of people are struggling already this year. There can be a lot of pressure to spend more than you can afford, so here are a few key things to remember as we head into 2022.

Be realistic and budget accordingly

Work out how much you can afford to spend – and stick to it. There's nothing wrong with managing expectations, and suggesting things such as spending limits, secret Santas or maybe even that you don't need to swap gifts.

Don't forget the everyday bills

Remember that the rent or mortgage, utility bills, food bills and other existing debts still have to be paid – the consequences can be severe if they're not. Even though it's Christmas, it's not worth starting the New Year being behind on your bills

Tempted by Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL)?

While it can be tempting to split payments, make sure you have a plan for how to pay the money back - particularly if your circumstances or income were to change. If you're using BNPL repeatedly or using multiple BNPL options, make sure you know how much you owe in total. Make sure you understand what you're signing up for, how you'll make the repayments and what will happen if you can't pay on time.

Buy safe to be safe

Whatever the deal, whatever the temptation, don't buy from unauthorised traders and don't borrow from unauthorised lenders. These could put you at risk of unscrupulous collection methods – including threats and harm, unsafe products and unexpectedly high interest rates. You may also not be protected by Financial Conduct Authority rules

Shop around

Try as many different places as possible to find the best price. Buy what you want and not what other people say you need. Be wary of extended warranties; the cost of a repair could be less than the cost of the warranty.

Get help if you're struggling

Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk can provide advice on this or any other issue, including debt, employment, benefits and family law. You can contact them on 01449 676060 or use the contact form at midsuffolkcab.org.uk/contact-us. For more information and our opening hours go to midsuffolkcab.org.uk.