

A person dressed as Santa Claus is shown from the waist up, carrying a large, overflowing sack of gifts. The sack is filled with various wrapped presents, including one with a teddy bear on top. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# In The LOOP

Your magazine of personal finance

November–December 2019

## *Ho-ho-hold the* **holiday overload**

**Eco-friendly  
holiday tips**

**Cook for  
a crowd—  
no sweat!**

**EOY business tips**

**Hitting the  
slopes 101**

**Name that  
holiday tune!**



## Time to spread holiday joy

It's hard to believe the holidays are here again! In tandem with the holidays is end of year (EOY) for businesses...and all the EOY tasks that come with it. Touch base with our firm if you need assistance.

We also invite you to check out the abundance of tips offered in this issue—geared to help make this holiday season the best yet. Before you do anything to prepare for the holidays, make sure you read our article on avoiding excess. Once you have adopted a moderate mindset, put our guidelines to work to reduce the energy you expel and the stress created

by cooking and entertaining this season. After you do, you'll be in perfect spirit to share our holiday music trivia with those you love.

Once the rush of the holidays is over—or maybe to help you handle them a little better—try skiing! Check out our tips to get you skiing like a pro quickly—even if you've never done it before.

We hope you enjoy this issue and a fabulous, festive season!

Sincerely,  
*Your Trusted Advisors*



# In this **issue**

November–December 2019

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As your guest count multiplies, so might your worries—unless you use these tips to keep your cool as you cook for a crowd this holiday season.

### 10 • EOY business tips

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We invite you to check out the tips offered in this issue to help you make this holiday season one of your best.

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Do you really know the lyrics to holiday songs as well as you think you do? Take our quiz to find out.



*Ho-ho-hold the*  
**holiday**  
**overload**





Is your to-do list already a mile long this holiday season? If so, you might be setting yourself up for serious holiday overload. These simplifying strategies can help you avoid excess on every level—financial, physical and mental—so take a few minutes and trim your list a little.

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### **Give yourself the gift of less, which is actually more**

If you say yes to all holiday parties, events and obligations, you will quickly burn out. Instead, give yourself the gift of doing less and enjoying it more. Be selective about what you agree to, and be sure to block out some time for doing absolutely nothing or doing something that you really want to do.

### **Refuse to take on holiday debt**

Use your creativity to spend less and find ways to enjoy the season—without the holiday debt hang-over. This may even mean making a deal with family members to reduce or eliminate gifts. Make this the year you agree to buy only for the kids or draw names instead of purchasing gifts for everyone.

### **Create new, simpler traditions**

If there are things that you “have” to do every holiday season and they bring you more dread than delight, make a change this year to save time, money and sanity! Consider having a “cookie-less exchange” or plan a walk through a local light display with relatives instead of going to an expensive movie. If you have clients who like to be wined and dined, consider having a wine and cheese event at your office instead of a fancy dinner at an expensive restaurant.

### **Don't overdo the halls**

While decking the halls is a fun tradition, it can take a lot of time, effort and money. Why not keep your décor a little simpler this year and get out only the most meaningful decorations? Decorating a little less elaborately also means you'll have less to put away later.

### **Focus on family, friends and faith this holiday season**

No matter what your beliefs are, this time of year is a special one in many cultures. Instead of elaborate parties and presents, hold off on the overwhelm that often takes over the season by spending time on meaningful traditions. Spend time with those who are special to you and set aside a little quiet time for seasonal reflections. You might even use the time to help others who are in need.

### **Spend time outdoors**

Nothing is more calming and enjoyable—especially with friends and family—than getting outside to look at lights or sing a few holiday songs for your neighbors. Plan to get back to nature this season to enjoy the outdoors and remove yourself from the seasonal chaos...even if it's only for a little while.

### **Create opportunities for downtime**

For every task that you cross off your list, add some time to just enjoy a movie, savor a seasonal snack or play some board games. Invite friends and family to gather round and have a lazy day (or two) in front of the fire.

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These are just a few of the ways you can ho-ho-hold the holiday overwhelm this season. Use these

tips as inspiration to help you stress less and savor more of the holiday spirit this year. ■





A string of colorful Christmas lights (red, yellow, green) is visible on the left side of the page, set against a dark red, textured background. The lights are illuminated, casting a warm glow. The text "Eco-friendly holiday tips" is written in a large, bold, white sans-serif font on the right side of the page.

# Eco- friendly holiday tips



Lights, heat, cooking and wrapping gifts are just some of the ways energy use gets amped up at the holidays. Review our list of tactics below to make your holiday greener.

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### **Choose LED lights.**

LED lights can use up to 90 percent less energy than standard lights. This translates into energy savings, cost savings and a reduced risk of fire.

### **Limit the time your lights are on.**

Try to limit the amount of time you have your lights on to 6 hours or less. To help, use a timer. If you don't have a timer, simply turn your lights on after the sun goes down and turn them off before you go to bed.

### **Put lights on energy strips.**

Did you know that some lights (and appliances) can continue to draw power even when they are turned off? To prevent this, plug your lights and other devices into a power strip, and then turn them off when not in use.

### **Turn your oven down or off.**

Experts say that if you're making a dish that will be in the oven for more than an hour, pre-heating is not necessary. Also, you can turn off your oven 5 to 10 minutes before the prescribed cooking time and it will continue to cook, as long as you don't open the door. If you use glass or ceramic dishes, you can decrease your oven temperature by 25 degrees for further energy savings.

### **Downsize appliances when possible.**

Smaller appliances use less energy than your full stove. Using a microwave, toaster oven, crockpot or warming plate instead of the oven or stovetop will save energy and often reduce your cooking time as well.

### **Multi-task your baking.**

Try to group your holiday baking by the temperature each dish takes to cook. Many recipes require the same temperature to cook, so whenever possible, bake them together in the oven.

### **Don't peek under the tree—or in the oven!**

Are you a peeker? If you like to keep opening the oven door to check your dish, know that every time you do the temperature can drop by as much as 25 degrees. Take advantage of the oven window and light instead.

### **Skip the battery-powered gifts.**

A smart way to conserve energy is not to buy gifts that require electricity. Battery-powered gifts contribute to waste, as well. Amazingly, 40 percent of all batteries are purchased during the holidays, and then live in perpetuity in landfills.

### **Use rechargeable batteries.**

Do you have to buy a battery-powered gift? If so, purchase rechargeable batteries and a battery charger. You may not reduce electricity usage, but at least you will reduce waste.

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The holiday season doesn't mean that you can't continue (or start) living an eco-friendly lifestyle. It also doesn't mean you can't enjoy the special things you love at this time of year. Using these tips can help you make your holidays energy efficient and give the gift of a cleaner Earth to all. ■



Cook for a crowd—  
**no sweat!**



The holidays are a great time to gather family and friends for a holiday meal. However, as your guest count multiplies, so might your worries—unless you use these tips to keep your cool as you cook for a crowd this holiday season.

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## **1 Avoid stress over a high-cost menu**

We don't like to think about it or say it out loud, but sometimes the most stressful part of cooking for a crowd is the cost. Ingredients add up quickly, which can put a strain on your budget during the most expensive time of the year. It's okay to put a budget on your holiday meal, and even ask others to bring dishes to pass.

## **2 Stick with familiar foods**

This doesn't mean offering a boring menu. It simply means that the holidays are not a good time to try a new recipe, especially if you want to reduce your stress. If you really want to try something new, be sure to make it prior to the big holiday meal. There's good reason why roasts and baked dishes are popular during the holidays—once you get them into the oven, you're pretty much done.

## **3 Plan in detail**

Being organized is key to cooking for a crowd. Plan in detail how long each recipe will take and what recipes you can make in advance. Also consider how much room you have in your fridge and the ingredients you will need. Being prepared will reduce your stress and save you multiple trips to the store.

## **4 Survey your stovetop**

Most stoves have four burners—six if you invested in a higher-end model. Plan out how you'll use each burner to get your cooking done and meet your serving schedule.

## **5 Organize your oven**

Most of us have only one oven, so plan for all the dishes that will need oven time. Aim to have the bulk of your heavy-duty baking completed ahead of time to free your oven for dishes that require cooking same-day.

## **6 Manage your labor**

Plan your menu in terms of levels of difficulty. Categorize dishes as follows: highly labor-intensive, mid-level effort and easy. Then identify which dishes can be made in advance and which can be store-bought. It's helpful if you can prepare labor-intensive dishes early. That way, your food preparation gets easier as you go!

## **7 Manage your expectations**

If you really want to do all of the cooking yourself this holiday season, then it is imperative to set realistic expectations. Don't expect your meal preparation to go as smoothly as your favorite cooking show. There will likely be a few harried moments when you need to ask for help or abandon a high-labor dish and replace with a store-bought one. Remember to give yourself props for hosting your holiday gathering and take pride in getting a special meal on the table.

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Don't let hosting a holiday meal steal your joy. Make sure you keep your work manageable, enlist the help of friends and family when needed, and keep your expectations in check. Then, when it's time to eat, you'll be able to truly enjoy the food, friends and family. ■

A graphic featuring a white speech bubble with a black outline and a tail pointing to the bottom left. Inside the bubble, the text "EOY business tips" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the bubble is a yellow lightbulb with a black outline and a grey base. The background is light blue with faint, overlapping rounded rectangles and scattered white circles and 'x' marks.

**EOY  
business  
tips**



Before the holidays completely take over, check out this list of tips for taking care of end-of-year business tasks. Doing so will help you stress less during EOY and better prepare you for 2020.

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## **Connect with our firm for a year-end review**

Now is the time to meet with us to review your financial standing and plan for next year. Year-end reviews can include your profit and loss report, year-end financial statements and projections for next year.

## **Update your payroll and benefits**

If our firm is handling your payroll, let us know about corrections that need to be made before the end of the year. If you handle payroll in-house, make sure you have all taxable fringe benefits, payroll deductions and changes in benefits and reimbursement accounted for. Also, don't forget to take care of payroll taxes and other compliance tasks.

## **Review your cybersecurity protocols**

Do you have a cybersecurity policy and protocol in place for your business? Do your employees know how to protect their information and how to avoid being victims of cybercrimes? If not, create a plan to protect your business from data breach. You may want to engage a cybersecurity professional to help you. Consider purchasing cybersecurity liability insurance as well.

## **Fine tune your 2020 goals**

Spend some time thinking about your business goals for 2020. Create a list of your top goals and then create a roadmap and budget for achieving them. Contact our office for guidance on goal creation.

## **Back up your data**

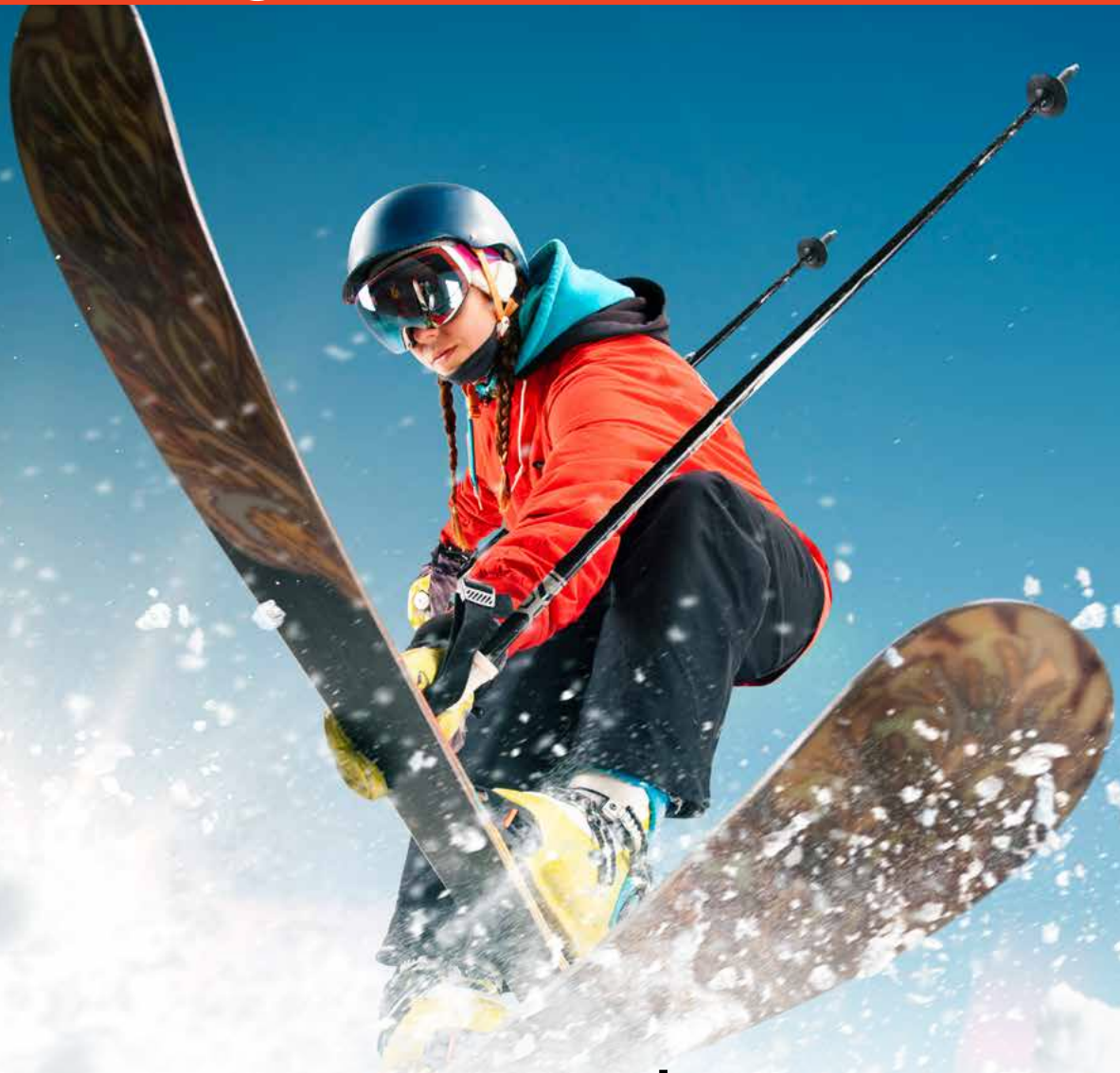
If your data is not in the cloud or you don't perform regular backups, make it a goal to change this in the new year. Until then, create a digital backup of all your key files and store it in a secure location.

## **Do a website check**

Conduct a thorough evaluation of your website. Make sure it represents your brand and reflects current messaging. Delete or add pages as needed. And, if it's in your budget, enlist the help of SEO professionals to make your site more visible.

## **Success in 2020 starts with a review of 2019**

Accounting, IT and administrative tasks may not be the most exciting things on your radar at this time of year, but they are all important. Giving adequate attention to these areas of your business now will help you start the new year with less stress. ■



# Hitting the slopes **101**



If you've always dreamed of skiing down snowy slopes, winter is the perfect time to learn. However, before you purchase skis or book a week at a ski lodge, use these tips to help you get started safely.

## Seek expert help

If you want to downhill ski (beyond the bunny hills), then be sure you get proper instruction. Even if you have family or friends who are veteran skiers, you still require the expertise of a certified instructor. Look online for ski instructors near you or book a few lessons at the ski resort you plan to visit. Getting ski instruction will reduce your fear and allow you to progress more quickly.

## Wait to buy equipment

Sure, you want to look like you belong on the ski hills, but ski equipment is expensive! Don't invest too much before you are sure that you really want to make skiing a longer-term hobby. It's better to put your money toward more lessons over ski fashions. Consider borrowing equipment or renting it for your first skiing season. When you are ready to invest, see our sidebar checklist to make sure you buy only what you need.

## Condition your body

If you have never carried ski equipment before, just know that it is quite heavy. Additionally, skiing well takes a good deal of strength, flexibility and balance, so you'll

want to condition yourself for the sport. Before you hit the slopes, make sure you train appropriately. Seek out a trainer who can show you proper form and moves.

## Be patient to progress

When you are just starting out, it can be frustrating to be on the small slopes, but learning the basic techniques is important. Plan to spend at least three to four sessions getting comfortable on the

bunny hills before tackling anything larger. Be patient, and before the end of the season you could be enjoying faster and more thrilling hills.

## Reward yourself après-ski

Once you've spent a day on the hills, be sure to stretch your body. This will help reduce soreness in your skiing muscles. A warm bath can also help. Of course, you'll want to refuel with a healthy meal and maybe even a glass or two of your favorite adult beverage or hot drink.

Good luck on your new skiing adventures! Follow the tips above and you'll be safely speeding down the slopes in no time. ■

### Your beginner ski gear checklist

- **Skis**  
(including bindings)
- **Ski boots**
- **Poles**  
(though it's easier to ski without them at the beginning)
- **Ski jacket and pants**
- **Socks**  
(wool or synthetic)
- **Layers of long sleeve shirts and flexible pants**  
(a thin base layer, preferably made of polypropylene to wick away sweat and water and a mid-layer of fleece)
- **Gloves**  
(waterproof and well-insulated)
- **Hat**
- **Goggles**
- **Helmet**  
(yes, you need one to avoid a brain injury)
- **Sunscreen**





From malls to grandma's house to your own Christmas playlist, you've probably heard these holiday songs hundreds of times. But do you really know the lyrics as well as you think? Take our holiday tune quiz to check your knowledge. Simply pick the correct tune to match the lyrics offered.

**1 "Round yon virgin mother and child"**

- a. Jingle Bells
- b. Silent Night
- c. I'll Be Home for Christmas
- d. We Three Kings

**2 "Bearing gifts we traverse afar"**

- a. Jingle Bells
- b. Silent Night
- c. I'll Be Home for Christmas
- d. We Three Kings

**3 "And Heaven and nature sing"**

- a. Away in a Manger
- b. Joy to the World
- c. While Shepherds Watched
- d. White Christmas

**4 "Tis the season to be jolly"**

- a. Deck the Halls
- b. While Shepherds Watched
- c. Jingle Bells
- d. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

**5 "God and sinners reconciled"**

- a. O Come O Come Emmanuel
- b. O Come All Ye Faithful
- c. Hark the Herald Angels Sing
- d. The First Noel

**6 "Disperse the gloomy clouds of night"**

- a. O Come All Ye Faithful
- b. O Come O Come Emmanuel
- c. Hark the Herald Angels
- d. The First Noel

**7 "Joyful and triumphant"**

- a. O Come All Ye Faithful
- b. Joy to the World
- c. Deck the Halls
- d. Ave Maria

**8 "Looked down where he lay"**

- a. The First Noel
- b. O Little Town of Bethlehem
- c. Joy to the World
- d. Away in a Manger

**9 "O tidings of comfort and joy"**

- a. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
- b. The First Noel
- c. Ding Dong Merrily on High
- d. Away in a Manger

**10 "On a cold winter's night that was so deep"**

- a. Away in a Manger
- b. The First Noel
- c. Ave Maria
- d. Deck the Halls

**Answers:**

1. b 2. d 3. b 4. a 5. c 6. b 7. a 8. d 9. a 10. b

# WE TAKE YOUR DATA SECURITY SERIOUSLY

Protecting your personal data from today's breed of cybercriminal is a main focus in our firm. We continue to implement best-of-breed technologies and enhance our internal processes to keep your sensitive data safe and secure.



*Thank you for making  
us your trusted advisor.*