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RUNNING A LITTLE SHORT - 43% of 6,389 Americans surveyed admit that they “have difficulty making ends meet” (source: National Financial Well-Being Survey, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau).

NEIGHBORLY - Canada cut its top corporate tax rate to 15% as of 1/1/12. The Trump White House proposed on 9/27/17 to cut the top US corporate tax rate from 35% to 20% (source: White House).

November is a month for leaves piled so high you could dive right into them and for crisp mornings, cold nights, and football. It is also a month for shopping.

I’m talking about “Black Friday” - the day after Thanksgiving - a veritable Christmas Day for retailers around the country. The ironic thing is that many people who shop on Black Friday actually end up losing money instead of saving it. That’s because in all the frenzy and excitement of chasing after deals, it’s easy to spend more money than what you planned. So, to keep your wallet “in the black” this Black Friday, here are a few things to remember:

1. Be careful driving to the store.

If you’ve ever driven on Black Friday, you know that the roads can be chaotic. People are out in droves. And, with everybody trying to get their hands on the latest video game console or designer purse, drivers aren’t always displaying the best judgment.

Speeding, reckless turns, and bumper-to-bumper traffic can lead to accidents. Accidents can lead to costly car repairs and higher car insurance premiums ... surely erasing whatever savings you hoped to gain.

2. The deals may be great, but the quality may not.

This is especially true of electronics. While items on sale may be discounted, the top-of-the-line, brand-name products might not be. Retailers know that consumers are usually willing to pay top-dollar for these so they have little incentive to provide lower prices.¹

3. Beware of impulse buying.

Once you’ve entered a store, retailers go to great lengths to get you to buy items you hadn’t originally intended to buy. Even grocery stores do it - ever notice the gum, candy bars, and magazines they sell next to the check-out stand?

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ESTATE TAXES –

The federal estate tax exemption is \$5.49 million for 2017 deaths, i.e., a married couple would be able to shelter \$10.98 million from federal estate and gift taxes. Only an estimated 80 small farms and closely held businesses will leave estates that will be subject to the payment of federal estate taxes as a result of a 2017 death. An estimated 2.6 million Americans will die in 2017 (source: Tax Policy Center).

BIG FLY AND NO FLY –

Major League Baseball set records for strikeouts in a season (40, 104) and home runs in a season (6, 105) during the 2017 regular season that ended on Sunday 10/01/17 (source: MLB).

Impulse buying can be taken to a whole new level on Black Friday. It's easy to get caught up in the vast inventory of merchandise around you, especially if it's on sale. While you may initially have gone to a store just to get a new cell phone, it's easy to look around and see those great headphones on sale, or that nifty digital picture frame. Master the impulse to buy these items, even if they're a "great deal." No matter how great the deal, they still cost money, and they're not why you went shopping. So buying them means you're giving up money for the things you *really* want for the things you only want right now.

4. Use cash, not credit cards.

Cash is handy on Black Friday, because it can help limit impulse shopping. If you only have enough cash to buy the items on your list, you'll be immune to temptation.

More to the point, though, is the danger of credit cards on Black Friday. While credit cards make shopping convenient, they can be a major drag on your finances. The national average interest rate for credit cards as of October 2017 was 16.72%.² Store-issued credit cards are even worse. These may contain special offers, such as a percentage off the first purchase using the card, but their interest rates are high. At the time of this publication, the average retail card APR has risen for the third straight year to 24.99%.³ Any savings you make on Black Friday could be obliterated by these rates alone. For that reason, leave your credit card at home and stick to cash as much as possible.

5. Sometimes, you don't even need to leave your house.

While Black Friday began in retail, it is now just as much an online event as it is in stores – arguably even more.⁴ And then there is Cyber Monday taking place a couple of days later with its own unique deals. You'll want to check shipping costs before you buy anything, but as long as they're not exorbitant, shopping from home might be the best way to keep your wallet feeling jolly this holiday season.

Hopefully you find these tips helpful. But no matter where, how, or if you shop, I want to wish you and yours a happy Thanksgiving and a wonderful holiday season.

¹ <http://www.smartmoney.com/spend/family-money/10-things-black-friday-wont-tell-you-1321569068898/#articleTabs>

² <http://www.bankrate.com/finance/credit-cards/current-interest-rates.aspx>

³ <https://www.creditcards.com/credit-card-news/retail-store-credit-card-survey.php>

⁴ <https://www.cnet.com/news/iphone-x-review-day-three/>

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