The holiday season begins at the end of November and stretches into the first week of January. But this five-week stretch may not necessarily be the best time for everyone to shop. Harvard Business Review says that the retail industry has been turned on its head in recent years, and shoppers and retailers may want to rethink their approaches to the holiday shopping season. Consumers are no longer interested in retailers dictating their shopping schedules, and some people have grown accustomed to buying products when they want them — especially when price is of no concern.

Even budget-conscious shoppers have changed their habits, says the shopping advisor RetailNext. Many holiday shoppers are delaying their shopping until January to take advantage of post-season sales.

Holiday shopping need not wait until after the holiday season, either. A 2017 RetailMeNot survey found that 45 percent of U.S. consumers said they planned to start shopping before November 1. One-quarter of the survey respondents said they planned to start shopping before October, and 12 percent started shopping for the holidays in the summer. So when should consumers do their holiday shopping? It all depends on what fits a person’s individual needs.

• Shop sales, not schedules. If budget is a big concern, shoppers should shop whenever they are available. That can mean shopping at any time of the year. People can try making a master shopping list early in the year and saving it on their mobile phones. While shopping throughout the year, items from the list can be purchased and stored until the holidays.

• Shop your strengths. Those who get a thrill from tackling their entire shopping list in one haul can still do that. Shopping in this manner can help shoppers focus on the task at hand and reduce the likelihood of wasting time. But keep in mind that, according to a survey conducted by Business Wire, 65 percent of holiday shoppers scramble to complete their purchases in the last two weeks before Christmas, so shoppers who delay may be stuck in long lines at the mall.

• Embrace in-store pickup. Many retailers are merging their online and brick-and-mortar operations. Shoppers have the convenience of price-comparison and online shopping, with the physical enjoyment of going out to the store to complete their purchases. In-store pickup often enables shoppers to avoid hefty shipping fees, as in-store pickup is free.

Plus, scoping out items online — and ensuring they’re in stock — saves the hassle of making a trip in vain. Shoppers can look beyond the conventional holiday season to get the best prices and deals that fit their shopping needs.
Design Your Holiday

Return your art to The Baytown Sun, 1301 Memorial Drive (original newsprint only please)

We will display in time for Santa to see your holiday wishes and publish some of the finished artwork in the Letters to Santa section December 23.

How to be certain you’re buying safe toys this holiday season

For things to compare to seeing the joy on a child’s face upon opening a holiday gift, many remember holiday gifts they received as children, and holiday shoppers often try to look for gifts that will bring just as memorable to the special youngster in their lives.

Shoppers might have kids’ smiles on their minds when holiday shopping, but it’s just as important to focus on safety when buying gifts for children. Prevent Blindness®, an organization devoted to ensuring everyone enjoys healthy vision from infancy through adulthood, offers the following tips to toy buyers who want to make sure they give safe gifts to kids this holiday season.

Read all warnings & instructions on box.

Before taking a toy to the checkout line, give the packaging a thorough read-through, paying particular attention to product warnings and instructions. Such warnings are designed to keep kids safe. When buying toys online, only purchase toys that include the warnings within the product description.

Purchase age-appropriate toys.

Kids’ toys come with age recommendations, which are typically listed on the front of the packaging. Stick to these recommendations. Kids might not have the ability to use toys designed for older children, and such toys might not be safe for them to use, so it's done best to stick to the age guidelines.

Avoid certain toys.

Toys with sharp or rigid points, spikes, rods, or dangerous edges can pose a threat to youngsters. Avoid such toys, opting for toys with rounded and/or dull edges instead.

Stick to sturdy toys.

Kids do not often treat their toys delicately. Toys will be dropped or thrown, so choose toys that cannot shatter being dropped or thrown without breaking into tiny pieces. Tiny shards can pose a choking hazard to curious youngsters.

Purchase toys with the ASTM designation.

ASTM International is an international standards organization that develops and publishes voluntary consensus technical standards for a wide range of products, including toys. Prevent Blindness notes that toys with the letters ASTM on the packaging have been tested and meet the toy standards set by ASTM.

Avoid toys with parts that shoot or fly off.

These types of toys can damage the eyes and lead to other accidents or injuries. When shopping for toys for children this holiday season, shoppers must consider safety first.

Artist’s Name: _______________________________________
Age: ____ What I want for Christmas most: ______________
Mailing Address: ____________________________________
City / State / Zip: ____________________________________

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The Baytown Sun

Baking Holiday Word Find

Find the hidden words in the puzzle.

BAKING CANDY CANE COOKIES DECORATE EGNOG GINGERSBREAD HOLIDAYS ICING SPARKL SWEETS

T H E B A Y T O W N S U N

Southern Charm

Home Decor, Gifts

Vintage Items and Furniture

(281) 770-0289

4303 Ferry Rd. | Baytown, TX 77520


Advertise to reach all those last-minute holiday shoppers in the final Gift Guide. Publish Thursday, December 20 in The Baytown Sun and in Chambers County Weekly.

The Baytown Sun

Thank you and Merry Christmas!
The holiday season is one of the best times of the year, especially when it comes to the community events I get to attend for the paper, sorting through heartwarming stories that are sure to get you into the spirit.

Last week I had the privilege of taking photos of the Highlands tree lighting ceremony, where hundreds gathered to meet and take pictures with Santa. The joy from the children, families and volunteers would have got anyone in the Christmas spirit.

After an hour of snapping photos of cute kids, who either loved or were terrified, I worked up an appetite and stopped in at 4 Corners BBQ, in sheer terror, I was able to take a picture with Santa or sat there watching the volunteers would have got anyone in the Christmas spirit.

I’m very picky when it comes to the dish. I usually prefer mustard-based potato salad, and always revere my mom’s as simply the best. But 4 Corners provided I was able to take some of it home and enjoyed what was left the following day. I’m now counting down the days until the coast will open 4 Corners BBQ is located at 7735 Decker Dr. through Saturday, 4 Corners BBQ is located at 7735 Decker Dr.

Christopher James is a reporter for The Baytown Sun. He can be reached at christopher.james@baytownsun.com.