

Gift Cards for the Holidays

Text reprinted with permission from the Office of the Minnesota Attorney General



Image courtesy of Photo Express foto source

Pre-reading

Questions:

- What do you know about gift cards?
- What questions do you have about them?

Definitions:

- Fine print – material printed in small type, often used in contracts and similar documents
- Consider – to examine or study
- Gesture – something that is done or said to show feeling for another

Reading

16 The holiday season is drawing near. **Consumers** are ready to shop! They are barraged by a
29 frenzy of flashy advertisements and persuasive sales pitches. Knowing your rights and being
mindful of the fine print can help you in the flurry of holiday shopping.

43 If you've ever felt confused or frustrated about what to buy for people, you may have already
60 turned to the increasingly popular gift card. According to researchers, holiday gift card purchases
74 totaled \$17 billion in 2004, roughly 8 percent of the total holiday retail sales. Before purchasing a
91 gift card for someone, there are some things you should consider.

102 The first thing to consider is fees. Make sure you know whether any fees may apply to the
120 card. While some cards do not have fees, others may charge purchase fees, monthly maintenance
135 fees, inactivity fees, or even balance inquiry fees. Don't be taken by surprise. Read the fine print.

152 A second thing to consider is **expiration dates**. Make sure you know whether there is an
168 expiration date for the card and what that date is. If there is an expiration date, find out whether
187 you will lose the remaining **balance** or if another card will be issued to you (and whether you will
206 be charged a fee).

210 You may want to ask about what the "lost or stolen" policy is for the gift card you are
229 considering purchasing. How does the company handle a lost or stolen gift card?

242 Another thing to consider is where the card can be used. A store gift card often can only be
261 used at the store in which it was purchased. Other gift cards can be used at many places
279 worldwide.

280 Once you've gathered all of the information about fees, expiration dates and other matters,
294 make sure you pass it on to the gift card recipients. They will appreciate your thoughtfulness and
311 kind gesture.

Understanding

1. What is an **expiration date**? Why is that important to know? _____

2. Why are gift cards a good choice for shoppers? (List at least two reasons.) _____

3. Are gift cards popular gifts? How do you know? _____

4. List four things you should consider before buying a gift card for someone. _____

5. What is a **consumer**? _____

6. What kinds of fees can be applied to gift cards? (List at least two.) What do those fees mean? _____

7. What does the word **balance** mean in this reading? _____

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: How have you used gift cards? Do you like them? Why or why not? Have you learned anything new about gift cards from the reading? If yes, what?
