

2007 Holiday Gift Card Study released

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Bankrate, Inc. this week published its Fourth Annual Holiday Gift Card Study. 31 issuers of gift cards were surveyed, including American Express, Discover, MasterCard and Visa; major retailers; and the six largest shopping mall operators. The study examines new trends, expiration dates, fees, and dormancy policies associated with gift card purchases.

"In some cases, the \$100 gift card you buy for your loved-one could be worth nothing when they try to make a purchase," said Ellen Cannon, managing editor at Bankrate.com. "A few minutes spent reading the fine print, can make a big difference in the gift you're actually giving," Ms. Cannon stated.

Key findings of the survey are: -- Best deal for consumers are still retailers' gift cards. They have no fee to purchase and no expiration date. -- All of the shopping malls and the big four charge fees to purchase a card as well as impose expiration dates. An expiration date means after that date, a monthly fee will be charged until the value of the card is spent or the balance is \$0. -- More customized cards are available. American Express offers nine types of cards such as for kids, teens, movie-lovers, newlyweds. Best Buy has 15 different cards, including "Happy Fun Day" and "Geek Squad." -- Partnerships for added incentives. Some American Express gift cards have incentives attached, such as a free box of popcorn at certain movie chains when you use the gift card. -- Gift cards now being offered by many different types of businesses, including nonprofits and state parks. -- Gift card malls -- those kiosks in drugstores and grocery stores -- continue to proliferate. The variety of cards offered also expands. Besides Starbucks or T.G.I. Friday's, new gift cards for golf or spa visits that can be used at hundreds of places across the country.

To view the complete findings of Bankrate.com's 2007 Holiday Gift Card Survey, go to <http://www.bankrate.com/giftcardsurvey>.

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