



The Potters Bar Consortium

Parents say 'no' to pester power

Christmas may be a time for giving, but parents struggling to meet the demands of their children's never-ending wish lists during the Credit Crunch are being urged by national charity Parentline Plus not to give in to pester power.

The charity is offering top tips to parents wanting to manage their child's demands and expectations this year when they are asked for expensive Christmas gifts that they can't afford. And with advertising campaigns increasingly targeting children to pester their parents it's not surprising that Christmas can be one big worry for parents and their purse strings.

'Parents can feel under pressure to spoil their children with expensive gifts and it's hard to say no sometimes', says Lucy Edington, Acting Chief Executive for Parentline Plus 'but parents can actually help their kids see they can't always have everything. One thing we advise is ask children to list presents in order of preference with a limit of five'

Parentline Plus top tips for parents by parents:

- **Don't feel guilty for not having a bottomless purse.** Especially if you want to give them things you never had. It helps to be calmly honest and explain what you think is value for money and what is affordable.
- **Don't say yes unless you mean it.** If your child asks you if they can have something and you feel put on the spot, tell them you will think about it so you can give them a final answer rather than break a promise which can be hard for your child to understand.
- **Remember that children change their minds every week with new crazes. Help them to see that they can't have everything they want** - tell them that not even Father Christmas has that much money and ask them to list presents in order of preference with a limit of five. Some parents tell their children that Father Christmas' list closes on November 30th (or a time convenient to you) to avoid last minute changes and panic buying.
- **Is there anyone who can look after the kids when you go Christmas shopping?** Although there is not always a babysitter to hand when you want to go shopping, there may be times where you can share babysitting so that you can go shopping without the children and avoid the stress of shopping with them.
- **When you say no, mean it.** If your kids know that you will eventually cave in they will keep trying. This can be the hardest thing to do. But just remember you are saying no for a reason.
- **Agree tactics with your partner.** Agree on decisions and stick to them so you don't undermine each other.
- **Setting ground rules with your ex-partner is important** in the same way all decisions are, so if you have said no for a reason you know your ex-

partner will back you up. But if this sounds an impossible task, don't let yourself get het up if they buy the kids presents you can't afford.

Remember all the things that you do give your child, like your time, love or simple but thoughtful presents will be remembered long after the latest toy has been thrown away.

- **When you say no it may help to talk to your child about why.** It could be that you can't afford it or that you only just bought them something last week. 'Just because I say so' is sometimes not enough for your child to understand the decision. But be firm so you don't get caught in the trap of haggling if your child has an answer for everything.
 - **Is there a compromise?** For example, the latest mobile phone doesn't come cheap but may be really important to your teenager and how they fit in with their friends. Is there a possibility of sharing the cost with your older children? If they have a Saturday job or paper round you could offer to pay for half if they put in the rest. Or could you combine birthday and Christmas presents together if they were set on something? Again if your child is really serious about something can the family club together rather than buy individual presents? If you do this you may need to remind your child that they will not be getting as many presents if everyone clubs together.
 - **Even if you say no try to show your child you understand how they feel.** Sometimes as parents we forget how important something as simple as a pair of trainers or the latest football shirt can be. But to some children it can mean so much more - like fitting in with friends, or trying to impress. Even if the answer is no, try not to be flippant with your answer.
 - **Try to get out of the habit of buying something every time you go out** and make treats be what they are treats – especially in the run up to Christmas. If you know your child will start asking for a new toy, take one of their favourites in your bag to distract them. Or if you know your child will want a drink or a snack pop some in your bag. They will soon learn that mummy or daddy's purse doesn't come out for them every time you go out.
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