Gift Cards for the Holidays
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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

The holiday season is drawing near. Consumers are ready to shop! They are barraged by a 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Level 5.5
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?

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Gift Cards for the Holidays – Level 5.5