



## Gift Card Caveats

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Gift cards for hundreds of different retailers can be purchased anywhere from grocery and drug stores to websites, but Consumer Reports advises against giving the plastic presents as gifts.

For one thing, the organization says, a lot of them never get used: 27% of the gift cards given during the 2006 Holiday Season were unspent a year later.

In addition, when stores go out of business the gift cards can end up worth little or nothing. And some have service fees that diminish the card's value. Shopper Corrita Jackson said she is a little more hesitant to give or receive a gift card this year. "When a store closes, most of the time you can't use the card any more. That's an issue," she said.

Atlantic Station's Management Company is hoping to alleviate those worries with a holiday guarantee this year. "If any national retailer files bankruptcy between November 28th and January 31st and they don't, for some reason, honor their gift cards we will issue an Atlantic Station gift card to be used at any of our stores," said Atlantic Station Vice President and General Manager Michael Diamontedes.

Some gift cards that seem worthless are actually not. An 11 Alive Staffer had a \$50.00 gift card issued in 2004 from Burdine's Department Store, which was long ago merged with Macy's. A phone call to the number on the back of the card led to a recording saying the card had expired. However, we waited a few minutes for a Customer Service Representative who said he could "Unexpire" the card. It is now valid to be redeemed at Macy's.

There is also a new type of card available in the metro Atlanta area called Sparkfly, which the bearer can present for discounts at businesses all around Atlanta. The Sparkfly card costs \$20.00 but can pay for itself if you remember to use it: it gets you 10% of Target Online purchases, and discounts to other businesses like FootLocker.com, Diapers.com, Sittercity.com, Events like the Atlanta Ballet, Falcons, Hawks and Thrashers games. The card can also score you perks like Backstage Access to the Atlanta Ballet, Private Nights with Santa at Phipps Plaza and Zamboni Rides at Thrasher's games. For more details, go to [www.sparkfly.com](http://www.sparkfly.com).

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