SOFTWARE & TECH

Fly Lady Holiday Control Journal

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795581414449884

With the holiday season quickly approaching, many households begin to feel the familiar stir of excitement mixed with a touch of panic. The weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day can be a whirlwind of gift shopping, meal planning, decorating, and family gatherings. For those who already follow the Fly Lady method—a popular home organization system created by Marla Cilley—the answer to holiday chaos is a dedicated tool: the **Fly Lady Holiday Control Journal**. This specialized planning resource transforms the most stressful time of year into a manageable, even joyful, season by applying the same principles of routines, decluttering, and baby steps that make the Fly Lady system so effective.

What Is the Fly Lady Holiday Control Journal?

The **Fly Lady Holiday Control Journal**is a seasonal extension of the Control Journal that every Fly Lady (and Fly Guy) maintains year-round. While the standard Control Journal contains daily, weekly, and monthly routines, cleaning schedules, and zone lists, the Holiday Control Journal focuses exclusively on the tasks and events that occur during the holiday period. It is not a physical notebook (though you can print one) but a set of organized pages, checklists, and prompts designed to keep your holidays running smoothly.

Created by Marla Cilley and available on the Fly Lady website, this journal provides a structured framework to plan everything from Thanksgiving dinner to New Year's Eve celebrations. It incorporates the Fly Lady philosophy of "do it in baby steps" and "you are not behind—don't try to catch up." Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the holiday to-do list, you break it down into manageable actions spread across the weeks leading up to the big days.

The History Behind the Fly Lady Method

To fully appreciate the Holiday Control Journal, it helps to understand the Fly Lady method itself. Launched in the early 2000s, FlyLady.net offers a free email-based system that helps people overcome clutter, build routines, and maintain a tidy home without perfectionism. The system emphasizes:
Daily routines (morning and evening) to keep things under control.**Weekly home blessing hour** where you do basic cleaning tasks.**Zone cleaning** focusing on one area of the house each week.**The Control Journal**where you keep all your routines and checklists.

Why You Need a Holiday Control Journal

The holidays introduce numerous extra tasks into your regular life. Without a system, these tasks pile up and create stress. A **Fly Lady Holiday Control Journal**helps you visualize everything that needs to be done and allocate time for it in advance. Here are the primary benefits:

1. Reduces Mental Clutter

When you write down every gift you need to buy, every dish you plan to cook, and every event you must attend, you free up your brain for more enjoyable things. The journal acts as an external hard drive for your holiday

plans. You no longer have to keep everything in your head, which lowers anxiety and helps you sleep better at night.

2. Prevents Last-Minute Rushes

One of the core Fly Lady principles is "Don’t wait until the last minute." The Holiday Control Journal includes a timeline or countdown that tells you exactly when to start various tasks. For example, you might begin decorating the first week of December, wrap gifts a week before Christmas, and plan the menu for Christmas dinner two weeks in advance. By following the schedule, you avoid the frantic, exhausted holiday that so many people experience.

3. Helps You Stick to a Budget

Many versions of the Holiday Control Journal include a gift list section with spaces for names, ideas, and amounts spent. This simple tracking mechanism helps you stay within your financial limits. You can also plan meals in advance, making better use of seasonal sales and avoiding expensive last-minute grocery runs.

4. Balances Traditions with Efficiency

Holidays are about joy, not perfection. The Fly Lady method encourages you to let go of “shoulds” and keep only the traditions that truly matter to your family. The journal includes space to list your favorite activities—baking cookies, watching holiday movies, driving to see lights—so you intentionally schedule time for what you love while letting go of optional tasks that cause stress.

Key Sections of the Fly Lady Holiday Control Journal

While the exact layout may vary depending on the year’s edition or the printable version you choose, most **Fly Lady Holiday Control Journals**contain several core sections. Understanding these sections helps you customize the journal to your specific needs.

1. Holiday Overview and Calendar

This section usually starts with a master calendar showing the months of November and December. You mark important dates: family gatherings, school concerts, office parties, and church services. You also note deadlines for shipping gifts, ordering turkeys, or purchasing tickets. The calendar gives you a bird’s-eye view of your holiday season, helping you see potential conflicts early.

2. Gift Planning Pages

Gift giving can be overwhelming, especially with large families. The journal includes pages for each person you need to buy for. Columns typically include:

Name
Gift ideas (with notes on sizes, preferences)
Budget amount
Date purchased
Wrapped or not
Delivered or to be given in person

3. Menu and Recipe Planning

Food is central to most holiday celebrations. This section helps you plan menus for Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve, and any other gatherings you host. You can list appetizers, main dishes, sides, desserts, and beverages. Next to each menu item, you note the recipe source and a checklist of ingredients you need to buy. Some journals also have a dedicated grocery shopping list organized by store aisle.

4. Cleaning and Preparation Schedule

Fly Lady is famous for its weekly cleaning routines, and the holidays add extra tasks like cleaning the guest room, polishing silver, washing linens, and decorating. The Holiday Control Journal provides a week-by-week checklist of tasks. For instance:

Week 1 (late November): Wash all extra linens and test holiday lights.
Week 2 (early December): Deep clean the living room and set up the tree.
Week 3: Bake cookies and wrap gifts.
Week 4: Final house clean and grocery shop for fresh food.

5. Decoration Inventory

A fun but often chaotic part of the holidays is decorating. Many Fly Lady Holiday Control Journals include a page to list your boxes of decorations by number, noting what is inside. Before you put up the tree, you can quickly see which box holds the stockings or the nativity set. After the holidays, you use the same list to document where each box goes in storage, making next year even easier.

6. Hospitality and Guest Prep

If you are hosting overnight guests, this section helps you prepare: what sheets to put on, bathroom supplies needed, and any special considerations like allergies or dietary restrictions. It also includes a list of things to do when guests arrive (towels, WiFi password, snack basket) so you don’t forget anything.

7. Holiday Budget Tracker

Separate from the gift list, a budget tracker helps you see total planned spending for gifts, food, decorations, travel, and entertainment. You record actual expenses to stay accountable. This is especially helpful if you are using cash envelopes or a specific savings plan.

8. Thank You Note Tracker

After the gifts are opened, you have the thank you notes to write. The journal includes a simple page to list who gave what, the date you received it, and the date you sent your note. This ensures no one is accidentally forgotten.

9. Reflections and Traditions

Holidays are about more than tasks. The Fly Lady method encourages gratitude and reflection. Many journals have space for you to note what worked well and what you might change next year. You can also write down which traditions you want to repeat and which you want to skip. This reflective practice makes each holiday season increasingly tailored to your family’s joy.

How to Start Using Your Fly Lady Holiday Control Journal

Ready to implement the journal? Follow these baby steps:

Step 1: Print or Purchase the Journal

Visit FlyLady.net and look for the current year’s Holiday Control Journal. It is usually available as a printable PDF for free or for a small fee. Some years Marla offers a deluxe version with additional pages. Print it and place it in a three-ring binder alongside your regular Control Journal, or use a separate folder.

Step 2: Gather Your Information

Before you start filling it in, gather your calendars, guest lists, and budget figures. Sit down with a cup of tea and a quiet hour. Open your online calendar or paper planner and transfer all holiday events into the journal’s master calendar. Write down the names of everyone you need to give gifts to, including coworkers, neighbors,

and service providers.

Step 3: Set Your Priorities

Use the reflection page early to decide what matters most this year. Maybe you want to focus on a simple, quiet Christmas with immediate family only. Maybe you want to host a big dinner for friends. Write down your top three priorities. Every decision you make afterward should support those priorities. If baking seven types of cookies does not align with your goal of a low-stress holiday, drop it.

Step 4: Break Down Large Tasks

Fly Lady's motto is "Baby Steps." Do not try to fill the entire journal in one sitting. Instead, work on one section per day. Today the gift list, tomorrow the menu, the next day the cleaning schedule. This keeps the process from feeling overwhelming.

Step 5: Follow the Weekly Routines

Once your journal is set up, refer to it daily. The holiday season can still be busy, but by checking off tasks as you complete them, you will see progress and feel in control. If you miss a week, do not panic. Fly Lady says: "You are not behind. Just start where you are."

Tips for Maximizing Your Holiday Control Journal

To get the most value from your **Fly Lady Holiday Control Journal**, consider these expert tricks:

Combine with the Holiday Home Blessing Hour

Fly Lady's regular weekly home blessing hour becomes even more important during the holidays. Dedicate one hour each week to tasks like dusting, vacuuming, and wiping counters. During the holidays, you might add one extra task from your journal (e.g., clean the guest bathroom). This keeps your home consistently presentable without a massive pre-guest cleaning session.

Use a Pencil or Erasable Pen

Plans change. Guests may cancel, new events appear, or you might find a better gift idea. Using a pencil lets you adjust without crossing out. Alternatively, use sticky notes for items that might shift.

Shop with the Journal

Take a copy of your gift list and menu shopping list when you go to stores. This eliminates impulse purchases and ensures you don't forget a key ingredient or a gift for a special person. Many smartphone users take a photo of the pages for easy reference.

Involve the Family

The Holiday Control Journal is not just for one person. If you have a partner or older children, invite them to participate. Let them choose a tradition from the list or help with decorating tasks. When everyone sees the plan, they are more likely to help and less likely to make last-minute requests that throw off your schedule.

Review After the Holidays

The true power of the journal is revealed in January. Take time to read your reflection pages. What did you spend too much money on? Which traditions brought the most joy?

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DIGITAL EDITION

fly-lady-holiday-control-journal

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