

Ending the Year on a High Note

Tips on how and where to tie up the year's loose ends

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There are a few rituals to end the year on a high note: clean, debt-free, all ready to start the new year. Here are some helpful hints on how and where to get organized.

Calendars and Planners

How can you start the new year without new calendar? All the major bookshops in Moscow sell wall calendars and day planners, but the first floor of the Dom Knigi shop at 8 Novy Arbat has the most varied assortment, including the coveted Moleskins (various sizes and colors), as well as day planners and diaries in French, Italian, English and, of course, Russian. Beware, though: the imported planners have import-high prices. Both the Tretyakov Gallery and the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts sell wall calendars showcasing their collections — good for your office and for gifts.

Cleaning Services

Starting the year on a clean foot — or keeping your apartment clean for guests, parties, and festive get-togethers — is harder in the end-of-the-year rush of work deadlines, holiday shopping, travel plans and the round of business and social parties. For a one-time massive clean, consider a service like [Qlean](#) that promises same-day or next-day service and can do a clean sweep of a three-room apartment for the fixed price of about 3,000 rubles. They even do windows and post-repair cleaning for separate fees.

Fitness Forward

In Moscow, like in every other city on the planet, fitness clubs have figured out that the best way to entice new members is with January discounts. Folks who have gained weight over the holidays — i.e., everyone — and people who make resolutions to lose it — i.e., everyone — are prime targets. This year, go for it and stick with it. Check out some clubs and decide which one you want to join, and then tell the sales rep to let you know when the discount (акция) kicks in. If you're an early riser, consider a day pass — usually until 4 or 5 p.m. — which can be up to 50 percent off the standard membership fee. If you're already a member, renew during a discount membership drive.

Helping the Needy

At the end of the year, orphanages, hospitals, homes for the elderly and other organizations are besieged by well-wishers. But in most cases, they don't need what people bring — and they need donations year round, not just in December. This year, make your generosity count. On the site [takiedela.ru](#) click on хочу помочь (I want to help) and see (in Russian) a list of organizations proven to do good work and clickable donation options.

[Charities Aid Foundation](#) supports a variety of projects and helps guide corporate and individual donors (English and Russian). Another aggregate site is [blago.ru](#) (Russian), where you can make donations to exactly the person or organization you want to help. The organization Perspektiva has a solid track record of helping people with disabilities in Russia for 20 years, and has easy ways of donating at [Perspektiva](#) (in English). And if you have bags of used clothes, household items, purses, jewelry, or other useful things, bring them to one of the [Shops of Joys](#) — charity shops that use the proceeds to support a wide variety of philanthropy.

Spread some joy over the coming year!

Mailing Gifts

If you left shopping and sending holiday gifts until the last minute, don't worry: Moscow has you covered. Although the major courier companies don't serve individuals, you can mail presents to family and friends at home with two courier services: [Mailboxes, Etc.](#) and

[Independent Postal Service](#). Expect to pay 3,000–5,000 rubles for a 1-kilo package to get to the U.S. or Europe in less than a week.

Pay your debts

According to Russian tradition — and superstition — it's important to pay all your debts by Dec. 31. If you pay them after Jan. 1, you'll be in debt all year. The Russian tax and traffic services also want you to pay up by year's end, especially if you're traveling abroad.

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