



Holiday GIFT GUIDE

November 2024
A Special Supplement to

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Why you should shop local for the holidays and beyond

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Various components come together to make the holiday season a festive time of year. There is a lot to get done in a short amount of time during the holiday season, and part of that includes shopping for all of the family members and friends on your shopping list. Shopping can be a complicated process that involves identifying which stores will be the best places to shop. Local retailers make the perfect place to shop for holiday items.

According to the American Express Business Economic Impact Study, more than two-thirds of every dollar spent with a local business stays in the community. Indeed, shopping local benefits consumer and community alike. The following are some of the many perks to shopping locally throughout the holiday season.

Personalized attention: Small businesses are known for their personalized customer service and owners and staff are often lauded for taking the time to interact and learn about their customers, a dynamic that is impossible at larger retailers.

Meet and interact with people: Shopping in-person at local stores, you'll see faces from your community and become better known in the local area.

Shorter lines: Local stores are bound to have smaller crowds and thus shorter lines. That translates to less stress and hassle when it comes to getting in and out with holiday gifts.

Smaller carbon footprint: Pollution, traffic congestion, habitat loss, and resource depletion may not occur on the same levels when shopping locally compared to patronizing



big box stores. That's because local retailers tend to create or source their products locally, whereas many big box stores secure their goods overseas.

Easier parking: This goes hand-in-hand with smaller crowds, as shopping locally does not typically require driving up and down endless aisles at malls or stand-alone retail stores in an effort to find a parking spot. Local retailers in town may have on-street parking or closed lots

that are convenient to shoppers.

Small batch shopping experience: Consumers can secure items in small businesses that are not carbon copies of those found across the country at major retail chains. When seeking a unique, thoughtful gift, shopping locally is the way to go.

Shopping locally this holiday season provides an array of benefits to consumers, and helps to solidify a strong Main Street in communities.

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Gifts for holiday hosts

Millions of people open their homes to relatives and friends each holiday season. Taking on the task of holiday host can be a labor of love, as it involves not only a commitment of time, but also a financial investment. Lending Tree reported that 60 percent of Americans considering hosting holiday gatherings in 2023 expected to spend an average of \$556 on their celebrations. Six-figure earners planned to spend even more, indicating they expected to spend \$764 on holiday hosting.

Guests benefiting from holiday hosts' hospitality can offer tokens of their appreciation upon

arrival. The following are some great gifts to offer hosts this holiday season.

- **Beverage of choice:** A bottle of wine or another spirit can be a great gift for holiday gatherings. Let hosts decide if they want to serve it with the meal or save it to enjoy at a later time.

- **Curated food basket:** A guest can put together a basket of different foods, including crackers, cheeses, jams, bread sticks, and other items that can be enjoyed as snacks or appetizers.

- **Holiday plant:** A poinsettia or Christmas cactus may be fitting this time of year, and a



holiday host can enjoy seeing it grow during the season.

- **Kitchen tools or serving items:** A beautiful olive wood serving platter or cutting board might be appreciated, particularly if guests arrive with it covered in a charcuterie spread.

- **Scented candle:** Hosts can set the mood and add to the ambiance of an entertaining space with lit, scented candles, which make for a great gift. Guests can inquire as to the hosts' preferred aromas or stick with safe bets like vanilla or cinnamon.

- **Holiday ornament or decorative piece:** Guests can offer ornaments for the tree or another decorative

item for hosts who are repeat entertainers. Dating the decoration or having it engraved can transform it into a memento hosts can relish through the years.

- **Comfort and care assortment:** Hosting takes effort, so a box of items to pamper holiday hosts can be a great gift. Fill the box with a loofah, bath bombs, shower gel, moisturizing cream, and massage oil.

Holiday hosts invest time and money into making their homes welcoming spaces to spend the holidays. Guests can treat these hosts with gifts to show how much their efforts and hospitality are appreciated.

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Gifts for music lovers

Danish author Hans Christian Andersen once said, "Where words fail, music speaks." Music is a universal language that can bridge cultures and unite people from all over the world in compelling ways. Is it any wonder that so many people are inspired, soothed and encouraged by music?

No two music fans are the same, so it's not always easy to find the right gift for the budding rock star or audiophile on a holiday shopping list. Tuning into these individuals' love for music is a great way to grab gifts they are sure to enjoy.

Go vinyl: Vinyl albums predate cassettes, compact discs and digital music. But there are still some artists who release on vinyl, and many music fans say nothing beats the sound of a record playing on a turntable. Find an artist the recipient loves, and visit a local music shop to track down a vinyl version of one of their albums.

Purchase an instrument: Has a budding musician had his or her eye on an instrument upgrade? Sweep in and be the holiday hero by purchasing a brand new one according to the specs desired.

Photo history book: Browse a local bookstore and you will find a range of books that are geared toward music fans. From biographies of famous artists to compilations of album cover art throughout the years to songbooks for aspiring musicians, there's no shortage



of options at a local bookseller.

Custom-molded earplugs: Hearing loss is nothing to take lightly, and music fans who frequently play or attend concerts need to prioritize protecting their hearing. Custom-molded earplugs will conform to the wearer's ear shape, offering ultimate protection.

Luxury headphones: A luxury set of headphones can provide amazing audio for the best listening experiences.

Audio interface: A loved one who wants to start making their own recordings will need an audio interface. This device connects a computer to music instruments and other audio equipment allowing one to play, record and process sound.

Approved fanny pack: Stadiums are cracking down on the types of bags concertgoers can bring in. Therefore, a stadium-approved clear fanny pack can be a great gift

for someone who is frequently watching live music.

Master class membership: Sometimes there's no better tutor than the professionals who have been there. With a Master

class subscription, a music lover can learn how to write songs, sing or even play music from well-known music stars.

Gifts geared toward music enthusiasts will hit all the right notes this holiday season.

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Thoughtful holiday gifts for grandparents

Grandparents play important roles in millions of families. Though grandmothers and grandfathers may always be ready to give a warm hug and provide a treat to their grandchildren, their role in modern families also includes helping with child care and other responsibilities.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017-2021 American Community Survey indicates approximately 33 percent of grandparents living with their grandchildren under the age of 18 were responsible for kids' care. In addition, USCB data indicates one in four children under the age of five is cared for by a grandparent while parents go to work or attend school.

There's no denying modern grandparents are actively involved in their grandkids' lives, providing an invaluable benefit to parents who might struggle to afford or find reliable child care elsewhere. With that in mind, families can make a concerted effort to find thoughtful gifts for grandparents this holiday season.

- **Travel gifts:** Grandparents may play an integral role in the daily lives of their families, but many aging individuals still aspire to travel, especially if they're retired. In fact, a recent poll by RBC Wealth Management-U.S. found that 63 percent of individuals age 50 and older identify travel as an important retirement goal. Families can surprise grandparents this holiday season with a cruise vacation, money to book flights to parts unknown or additional travel-related gifts, such as new luggage.

- **Framed children's artwork:** Whether it's purchased through a child's school or via a third party seller or created at home as a family craft project, framing artwork created by children in a frame designed for grandparents is a heartwarming gift. School-aged youngsters are especially productive artists, so artwork can be updated over the course of a year as grandparents are gifted more and more memorable pieces.

- **Home upgrades:** Upgrades around a grandparent's home can vastly improve their quality of life, particularly if they've long since reached retirement age. Arrange for



the installation of grab bars in grandparents' bathrooms and reinforced staircase bannisters around the house. Such a gift might not be as heartwarming as children's artwork in a specialty frame, but it is a practical and potentially lifesaving token of your love and appreciation.

- **Journal:** A journal is another thoughtful gift that encourages grandparents to share their life stories. Though it's up to grandparents to decide what they want to write about in their journals, a suggestion to detail their life stories lets them know their families are interested in how they became the people they are today. Grandparents may cherish the opportunity to pass on their life stories and anecdotes to the younger generations of their family.

- **Ancestry kit:** Interest in genealogy has increased dramatically in recent years, as advancements in technology have made it easier than ever to trace one's ancestry. If grandma and grandpa have yet to join the genealogy party, a DNA kit from a popular ancestry service can open the door to an illuminating and fascinating hobby.

Grandparents do a lot for their families, and the holiday season provides a great opportunity for families to show grandmothers and grandfathers how much they're appreciated.



Go 'mutts' for these pet gifts

Pet parents try to ensure their companion animals never want for anything. People will go to great lengths to pamper their pets with the best care, food and accessories. According to the American Pet Products Association, consumers in the United States spent \$147 billion on pets in 2023. And it's not just the essentials that have people opening up their wallets for pets. A 2022 YouGov survey found that 57 percent of owners buy holiday gifts for their pets and 40 percent host birthday celebrations.

With the holiday season on the horizon, there's a good chance that beloved pets are on gift lists this year, particularly for Gen Z pet owners. A

study of 1,000 U.S. adults conducted by Talker Research for Newsweek found that Gen Z spends an average of \$148.50 on their pets each month, the highest of all surveyed. For those shopping for gifts their pets will enjoy, these options could have tails wagging.

- **Treat dispenser:** It isn't possible to be home with their pets all of the time. A dispenser that can be programmed to offer treats at certain intervals or connected to an app that enables a person to release one at the push of a button can be a nice gift to surprise stay-at-home pets.

- **Puzzle toy:** Pets need to keep their brains working; otherwise, they may

get bored and into trouble. A puzzle toy that has treats or kibble hidden behind panels helps pets remain mentally sharp.

- **Pet booties:** When the weather gets chilly, walking dogs outdoors on the ice and snow can be painful on their paws. A pair of booties can protect the delicate pads of pets' feet from ice melt products, snow and sharp objects.

- **New bed:** Upgrade a pet's bed to something even more lush and comfortable. A fleece blanket and a dedicated pet pillow can help pets feel even more pampered.

- **Safety belt:** Guarantee that trips in the car to the dog park or other ex-

cursions are safer by gifting a safety pet harness that works like a seatbelt in a vehicle.

- **Grooming package:** Everyone wins when a pet is washed, dried and primped to perfection. Professional groomers have the skills to tame excess fur and trim nails so pets smell wonderful and remain comfortable.

- **New toys:** Whether a pet is a parakeet or poodle, gifts of new toys can be engaging for animals who have grown bored with their old ones.

Be sure to wrap up clever gifts for pets so that every member of the family has something to enjoy come the holidays.

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Holidays 2024: Are shoppers and retailers in sync?

(BPT) - By Lisa Grayston, vice president of Commerce Operations, Coveo

The holiday season is a time most retailers, and people who love celebrating and gift-giving, look forward to above all. While making predictions may seem risky, a number of indicators point to a jolly holiday season for shoppers and retailers alike this year. To get our finger on the pulse of 2024 shoppers, Coveo conducted an annual holiday shopping outlook report, "Gift or Grinch? Unwrapping This Season's Shopper Spending Plans," based on a survey of 4,000 consumers in the U.S. and U.K., in partnership with Arlington Research. Going a step further, we compared those shoppers' views with retailer perceptions from last year's holiday report surveying retail executives from 92 U.S.-based retailers, most with revenues above \$250M.

The upshot? Many approaches top retailers are pursuing to improve retail sales-optimizing Black Friday/Cyber Week events, using AI to offer shoppers personalized recommendations and maximizing promotions to improve shopper loyalty - also create what shoppers want: opportunities to find the perfect gifts for everyone on their list while scoring great deals.

2024 consumer shopping outlook

Over three-fourths of surveyed shoppers (76%) say they plan to maintain or increase gift purchases this year, which retailers will be happy to hear. In fact, 59% of shoppers say they plan to cut down on everyday purchases to prioritize their gifting budgets.

While the 2023 retailer survey found that most retailers (84%) feel consumers can get deals anytime, the majority of retailers (58%) believe holiday events remain a powerful source of revenue, with 76% of the above-average retail performers supporting this idea. Retailers say they approach the shopping peak as a coordinated effort to

create brand excitement, and shoppers agree.

In the Coveo 2024 Holiday Shopping Report, 68% of U.S. shoppers said they plan to shop at one or more stores on Black Friday or Cyber Monday, with big box/department stores being the top holiday shopping category. Electronic stores (37%) and fashion/apparel (36%) were the top two shopping choices for Black Friday or Cyber Monday.

Generative AI and the online shopping experience

There's no question AI has changed - and will continue changing - how we shop. For retailers, that means learning how technology can create a positive user experience that also drives sales and builds brand loyalty. For consumers, this means making the search for the perfect gift seamless: a quicker, more personalized, more convenient and satisfying way to shop.

The Coveo 2024 Holiday Shopping Report found digital shopping continuing its upward trend, with 80% of shoppers finding special offers purely through digital channels (email, social media, online search and online marketplaces). Shoppers appreciate shopping assistance, with 61% of consumers saying that pre-set search categories like "gifts for dad" or "gifts under \$50" are helpful. Nearly one in three shoppers (31%) also say having generative AI provide specific holiday gifting recommendations would be useful - rising to nearly half (44%) for millennials.

When it comes to online shopping, shoppers are only a browser window away from a better experience. Shoppers expect personalized and relevant experiences, similar to what they would get from a knowledgeable store associate. Only AI can effectively help companies successfully deliver individualized, trusted and connected experiences at a scale that meets and exceeds people's expectations. And if you add GenAI to the mix, you can not only provide shoppers with answers, but you can provide them with a deeper level of advice - such

as which lotion is best for your particular skin type or problem area.

Offers and promotions tailor-made for success

The Coveo 2024 Holiday Shopping Report also found an impressive 90% of shoppers are open to adding items to their existing orders during the holidays, presenting a golden opportunity for retailers to boost sales. Offers like free shipping, relevant special promotions and personalized recommendations also delight shoppers by helping them find the perfect gift while maximizing value.

When this year's survey asked consumers what would compel them to add to an existing order when shopping online, "Meeting the minimum spend to get free shipping" was the top answer (62%). The second highest response was, "Relevant special offers popping up" (48%), followed by "Recommendations for family members" and "Recommendations for other items" (both 26%).

Top-performing retailers from the 2023 study recognized this growing interest in receiving relevant personalized offers. Clearly on track with what today's shoppers expect, 90% of retail executive respondents said the ability to provide personalized offers was moving from "nice-to-have" to "must-have."

The surveys of both retailers and consumers make it clear that "one-size-fits-all" thinking no longer motivates sales. In today's digital, AI-powered shopping landscape, it's crucial to offer increasingly personalized offers and deals both to please consumers and to stay competitive. Business success during the busy holiday season means creating deliberate, hyper-personalized, focused strategies that reach and delight each consumer, wherever they are on their shopping journey.

To learn how Coveo helps businesses make the most of AI in today's digital shopping environment, check out the free ebook at [Coveo.com](https://www.coveo.com).

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How to make shopping Black Friday/ Cyber Monday pay off

The holiday shopping season is a profitable period for retailers. So it should come as no surprise to consumers that many stores now begin stocking shelves with Christmas décor and other holiday-related items as early as September, reminding shoppers that the countdown is on until the holidays arrive.

Historically, Black Friday has been the busiest day for retailers, but Cyber Monday has increasingly become a go-to holiday shopping opportunity. Now largely known as BFCM, Black Friday Cyber Monday is undoubtedly the busiest time of year for retailers. These days can be a make-or-break period for many merchants. According to Drip, an e-commerce customer data aggregator, Cyber Monday was the biggest shopping day in 2023, with shoppers spending \$12.4 billion - a 9.6 percent year-over-year increase. The National Retail Federation reported a record 200.4 million shoppers participated in Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales in 2023.

As people consider their BFCM shopping plans for 2024, these tips can help them make the most of these unique opportunities.



· **Become a price connoisseur.** Consumers who would feel right at home calling out correct prices on “The Price is Right” will have an advantage come the holiday shopping season. By understanding the standard retail price on many items, it is easier to know just how customer-friendly BFCM deals are. Consumers can look at the advertisements in newspapers or online and only shop the best deals to save money.

· **Pay attention to early bird deals.** BFCM is a great opportunity to save, and many retailers have extended this exclusive price-slashing period to offer “sneak peeks” and “early bird” opportunities that precede Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Shoppers can keep an eye out for early BFCM

deals to save even more money.

· **Explore loyalty rewards.** Shoppers who are part of stores’ rewards programs, whether that entails earning loyalty points or having a store credit card, may be eligible for additional perks. Although one’s email inbox may be overflowing this time of year with promotions, individuals should double-check their accounts to see if they’ve been given early access to sales or special coupon codes that can bring prices down even further. Some retailers also may utilize digital coupons that need to be “clipped,” which is basically saving them to a loyalty account.

· **Plan the shopping list in advance.** A complete shopping list at the ready can make it easier to shop for

specific items during Black Friday or Cyber Monday hours.

· **Avoid impulse buying.** It may be tempting to grab many different items because the prices seem so good. However, sticking to a list and only shopping for necessary items is an effective way to avoid overspending.

· **Don’t forget small businesses.** Be sure to check out the sales at local small businesses during BFCM as well as Small Business Saturday. Shoppers may find that deals at smaller retailers rival those at larger chains.

Black Friday and Cyber Monday present chances to save. Making the most of these shopping opportunities can translate to scoring holiday gifts at the lowest prices possible.

Great gifts for globe-trotters

John Denver sang about “leavin’ on a jet plane,” inspiring many to take a flight to parts known and unknown. Millions of people travel to and from the country every year, with TravelPerk estimating the market size of the United States tourism sector at \$798.81 billion in July 2023. Tourism took a hit during the global pandemic, but traveling has since rebounded in a big way.

With so many people taking to the roads, rails and skies, shoppers can customize their gift lists when shopping for people who have caught the travel bug. Below are several gifts for those with wanderlust.

Portable Bluetooth speaker: Music can make the journey more interesting and create a welcoming ambience upon arrival. People who don’t want to leave home without their favorite tunes often have curated playlists on popular music streaming services. While earbuds are a go-to for personal listening, a portable speaker can provide impressive sound to share songs with friends when relaxing by the pool or traversing trails.

Ergonomic neck pillow: Getting some rest and being comfortable while traveling is key. Ergonomic neck pillows keep the neck and head in a comfortable

position when sitting upright during long flights or rides.

High-quality passport cover: Consider a passport travel cover that is personalized with a graphic, name or monogram. A cover can protect the passport and keep other travel documents orderly while adding a layer of elegance to travel.

Compression packing bags or cubes: Travelers want to ensure they can bring all their gear when getting away, but sometimes suitcase space can come at a premium. Compression products work like a vacuum sealer, removing air to reduce the space that items take up.

Travel adapter: International travel requires contending with different power outlets. In order to use electronic equipment brought from home, travelers will require the right adapter. Look for ones with multiple ports.

Travel pouch or money belt: Keeping valuables out of the hands of pickpockets means being savvy about safe storage. Travel pouches and money belts are designed to be discrete, and some can be hidden in waistbands or under clothing to protect valuables.

Travel journal: Journals allow travelers



to capture memories along the way, with space to jot down experiences and add photos. It can make for a cherished keepsake in the future.

A rolling, vibrantly colored, carry-on ensures the luggage is easily spotted and gives travelers the option to skip baggage check and bring it right on board.

New luggage: Every traveler needs a durable piece of luggage or two when the desire to see the world strikes.

Travel enthusiasts can appreciate gifts that cater to their desire to get away from home.

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Holiday shopping tips you can't afford to miss

The festive and fun nature of the holiday season can make it easy to forget the benefits of being frugal. Many people go overboard on holiday spending, making this time of year costly for consumers.

Sales between the beginning of November 2023 and Christmas Eve 2023 climbed 3.1 percent from the year earlier, according to the Mastercard Spending Pulse. The National Retail Federation reported in November 2023 that holiday spending was expected to reach between \$957 and \$966 billion. Trading Economics, a financial market indicator and forecast provider, said personal spending in the United States only rose 0.2 percent in May 2024 from the previous month, which marked the lowest increase since January 2024.

Shoppers who want to spend less and stick to a budget for holiday entertaining and gifting can keep these budgeting tips in mind.

- **Set a value to gift recipients.** It may sound harsh, but certain people on holiday shopping lists may be assigned a higher value than others. For example, you wouldn't necessarily spend the same amount on a gift for a child's teacher as you would for a grandmother. Putting a dollar figure next to each name on the shopping list helps you identify

your expected spending and where you can cut back, if necessary.

- **Establish your overall budget.** Once you have an idea of your potential holiday expenditures, set a firm budget. Avoid the temptation of impulse buys, which can make it easy to go over budget.

- **Begin shopping early.** Start scouring ads and looking for deals prior to Thanksgiving or Black Friday. Keep a running list of gift ideas and when the price is right, purchase those items.

- **Price check "perfect gifts."** If you've spotted the perfect gift for someone but it's beyond budget, see if you can find a better price elsewhere, says Better Money Habits. There are apps that allow users to scan barcodes and check items across various retailers. Many stores also have price-match policies that can save shoppers money.

- **Look for deals all of the time.** Many people get hung up on perceived deep discounts from Black Friday and Cyber Monday offers. However, industry experts say there often isn't a huge difference in markdowns between these promotions and those during other sales. Some retailers even increase prices on goods only to mark them down for Black Friday to make it appear that there is a discount.



Only by knowing the average price for items can you know if a sale is legitimate.

- **Sign up for store rewards.** If you don't want your regular email inbox inundated with offers, set up a separate email account for in-store and online shopping. Then you can sign up for the rewards programs at checkout. Utilize the coupon codes and advertisements for sales to save money without having your primary email data shared with other

marketers.

- **Track spending carefully.** If you don't know how much you're spending, then you cannot possibly stick to a budget. After each purchase, keep a running tally of all holiday spending to see how far you are from the finish line.

The holidays can be expensive, but with smart budgeting and dedication to savvy shopping, it's possible to stay out of financial trouble.

Add seasonal bazaars to your list of holiday shopping locations

There is no shortage of options to find every item on your holiday shopping list. Shopping malls, online retailers and mom and pop stores along Main Street can be great spots to grab holiday deals, but shoppers also can find great gifts at holiday fairs and bazaars.

Bazaars are found all over the world, but are notable to Middle Eastern and Asian countries. Bazaars are marketplaces that feature several small shops or vendor stalls. In some countries, bazaars are outdoors and covered by tents, while in others they feature several stalls set up in large rooms.

Holiday bazaars often pop up during the holiday season and mimic international marketplaces. They may be hosted by cities or towns, schools or places of worship. Sometimes they are fundraising opportunities, with nonprofit organizations charging a stall- or table-renting fee for bazaar participants. Holiday fairs and bazaars often bring together an array of different retailers, many of whom are small businesses selling interesting wares.



Shoppers should take advantage of every opportunity to visit these holiday bazaars because they will only be around for a short time. Here's a look at some of the benefits of bazaar shopping for the holidays.

- **Patronize small businesses.** Holiday bazaars often bring together small businesses that may not normally have storefronts. This allows shoppers to meet the individuals behind businesses they already patronize or discover new firms they were previously unacquainted with.

- **Shop unique wares.** Holiday

bazaars may showcase items not easily found elsewhere, from handcrafted jewelry to unique soaps to custom woodworking items.

- **Develop new relationships.** Shopping at holiday bazaars enables you to meet and interact with new people. This can expand your social circles and may even expand your professional network.

- **Enjoy the shopping experience.** Shopping away from the bustle of larger, busier retail stores gives you a break from the harried shopping experience many experience during the holiday season.

Rather, holiday fairs and bazaars typically are less crowded and engage at a slower pace. Plus, they may have a more homespun decorating design that can have you feeling like you're shopping in a Christmas village.

- **Take advantage of food vendors.** Food vendors likely will be mixed within the offerings of the holiday bazaar. That gives you opportunity to take the day off from cooking and enjoy some savory and sweet bites while grabbing gifts.

Holiday shopping bazaars are great places to shop for the holidays.

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5 fun gift exchange ideas

Gift-giving is a significant component of the holiday season. Families can embrace traditional gift-giving, but those who want to add a touch of whimsy to gatherings with loved ones can consider these five creative and fun ways to exchange gifts.



1. Play the plastic wrap game. To exchange small stocking stuffer gifts, compile gift cards, cash, small toys, candy, and even some larger gifts (all participants can chip in and one person shops for the gifts). The designated person in charge begins rolling up the gifts in the plastic, adding one every few rolls. Turning the ball 90 degrees while wrapping helps make a more round, finished gift ball. To play, the person with the ball puts on oven mitts and tries to unwrap as much as they can to access the gifts, while the person to the left is attempting to roll doubles on dice. When doubles are made, that person passes the dice to the left and starts his or her own attempts to get at the gifts in the plastic ball. The game ends when all the gifts are revealed, whether everyone has had a chance to unwrap or not.

2. Plan a white elephant gift exchange. A white elephant exchange is like a secret grab bag. Everyone brings a wrapped gift, and then takes turns choosing a gift based on the number they've been given. When the gift is chosen, the person opens it. The next player can select a fresh gift or steal one of the presents that's already been opened.

3. Host a make-and-take craft party. With this type of exchange, participants will engage

in some form of crafting for the duration of the event, whether it's pottery, painting, epoxy resin pouring, or even knit crafts. At the end of the night everyone can swap their creations with another or keep their own crafts as gifts.

4. Give the gift of a group outing. Instead of exchanging material gifts, focus on sharing experiences with friends and family. A trip to watch a sports game or a theater performance can be an excellent way to spend time together, and something a person may not be inclined to do on his or her own. Certain venues will offer discounts on group tickets, so everyone can pool their resources.

5. Host a DIY cookie and cocoa exchange. Cookies, cocoa and the holidays are a perfect combination. A gift exchange where participants supply ingredients for these sweet treats, share their favorite recipes and then put together the finished products can make for an entertaining and festive afternoon. Each person can fill a cookie tin with baked cookies to take home and mason jars filled with homemade hot cocoa mix and marshmallows can be an additional gift to enjoy later on a chilly evening.

There are plenty of fun ways to exchange gifts during the holiday season.

8 guidelines for safe gifts

Everyone wants their gifts to be well-received. For those giving presents to children, they want to see kids' faces light up with excitement when they find a spectacular present underneath all that wrapping paper. In order to elicit that joy, some people may sacrifice safety in order to buy the "coolest" or the "hottest" gifts around. But that could be a recipe for injury. It is essential to consider safety anytime one is buying gifts for children.



The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission says an estimated 200,000 toy-related injuries were treated in United States hospital emergency departments in 2020, with most patients four or younger. The Public Health Agency of Canada notes that, between April 1, 2011 and Nov. 9, 2022, there were 29,268 cases of toy-related injuries, and children between the ages of one and four were the most affected.

When buying gifts for children, shoppers can consider these safety strategies.

1. Check the recommendations. Toys and games come with age recommendations for a reason. Note ages listed on boxes, never choosing above the

child's age even if the youngster seems mature for his or her age.

2. Be mindful of small parts. Small toys can present a choking hazard. Also, check to see if parts are secure or can break off.

3. Check breakability. Avoid gifts that seem flimsy or delicate. Stay away from toys made from glass or thin plastic, as they could shatter if dropped or thrown.

4. Be mindful of antiques. Although older or antique toys and games can be interesting and readily found at garage sales and flea markets, some older toys could be unsafe. They may contain

lead or toxic paints. Others may not have been made in adherence to modern toy safety standards.

5. Look for the ASTM label. ASTM International is a standards organization that publishes technical international standards for a range of materials. Games and toys that meet ASTM safety standards are better choices.

6. Check battery sizes. Selecting powered gifts that utilize larger batteries could be safer for children. Size D, C, and even double A are better than items that use very small, button-like batteries, which can be easily swallowed,

potentially causing injuries to the digestive tract. Also, confirm that batteries are hard to access.

7. Include protective gear with the gift. If you purchase a gift like a skateboard or bicycle, include helmets and additional safety gear to ensure they are safer to use.

8. Learn how gifts work. Read the instructions and familiarize yourself with the operation of the gift so you can help the child use it correctly.

When buying gifts for children, well-meaning individuals must take the safety of an item into consideration.



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