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## Recent survey reveals insights that can guide shoppers and retailers

As the holiday season approaches, many consumers are planning to kick off their shopping earlier this year, aiming to lock in low prices, take advantage of promotions, and ensure all their gifts arrive on time.

A recent survey by Sensormatic Solutions reveals key insights that can guide both shoppers and retailers during this busy time.

According to the survey, 52% of respondents plan to start their holiday shopping earlier than last year, and while shoppers are looking for deals, 48% plan to spend more than they did last year.

"Understanding consumer trends is critical for both shoppers and retailers alike," said Christa Anz, global marketing leader, Sensormatic Solutions.

"This survey highlights important considerations that can enhance the shopping experience and inform retail strategies," Anz explained. Here are some of the survey's top findings:

## EARLY SHOPPING TRENDS

Over half (54%) of shoppers planned to begin their holiday shopping before November.

This trend indicates a shift toward early planning to secure deals and avoid the rush of the season's busiest shopping days.

Early shopping is also attractive as it helps lock in the best prices and ensure stock availability.

### PREFERRED PICKUP OPTIONS

This year, 42% of shoppers plan to use buy-online-pick-up-in-store options, and 35% will opt for curbside pickup.

However, 29% of respondents are concerned about possible long wait times, suggesting to retailers the importance of efficient customer service during peak hours and the need to provide several pickup options.

## SPENDING MANAGEMENT

While nearly half of shoppers surveyed

plan to spend more this year, 52% of respondents noted they are creating a shopping list to avoid impulse purchases.

In fact, 64% of younger shoppers have used recent deal days and flash sales to maximize their spending, according to survey results.

### PRIORITIZE SAFETY

Safety is key to a productive holiday shopping season. In fact, 69% of consumers feel safer with visible security measures such as security personnel, surveillance cameras, and Electronic Article Surveillance tags, and 34% of them consider these features essential for in-store shopping.

This aligns with performance data that suggests such visual deterrents can effectively reduce theft and organized retail crime.

Retailers should prioritize safety features, such as surveillance cameras and security personnel, to foster a positive shopping environment.

For more holiday shopping insights, visit sensormatic.com.

(STATEPOINT)

This holiday season presents an opportunity for both consumers and retailers to adapt to evolving shopping behaviors. By understanding these insights, retailers can better meet customer expectations, while shoppers can enjoy a more informed and relaxed shopping experience. ADOBE STOCK PHOTO VIA STATEPOINT *Gift Guide*  SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7 KENOSHA STORES 10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

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# Get them something they will actually use GIFTS THAT BRING COMFORT DURING THE COLD CAN BE SMART AND THOUGHTFUL

Staying warm during the cold winter months is a top priority for many, which is why holiday gifts that help in this endeavor are always a surefire hit!

Here are some head-to-toe gift ideas that will add comfort to the season and show your loved ones you care.

1. Functional gloves for the fashionista. From navigating with GPS to queuing up a playlist, the woman in your life relies on her devices all the time outdoors. That's why her gloves should offer touchscreen-capable fingertips so that even in frigid temperatures, she can stay cozy and connected. Enter the Women's Mya Faux Fur Cuff Gloves from Isotoner, where style meets practicality. With SmarTouch technology for superior touchscreen capability and SmartDri water-repellent features that make rain and snow roll right off, elevating winter weather ensembles has never been easier!

2. On-the-go coziness for the fashion forward. Staying warm and stylish with this must-have beanie and scarf set is easy.

Featuring a waffle knit beanie with Levi's iconic red tab and a soft buffalo plaid scarf, this duo is perfect for onthe-go coziness and will keep



Staying warm during the cold winter months is a top priority for many, which is why holiday gifts that help in this endeavor are worth consideration. STATEPOINT PHOTO Gift Guide



your loved one comfortable during all their favorite winter activities.

Designed for the fashionforward, it's an ideal gift for anyone looking to blend warmth with timeless style.

**3. For the best dressed friend.** Ultimate comfort and style go hand in hand with Women's Shortie Stretch Microsuede Gloves.

Made from super soft and stretchy microsuede fabric, these slim-fitting contoured gloves feature a velour interior and plenty of stretch, providing warmth and flexibility with none of the bulk.

With touchscreen-enabled fingertips and a water-repellent exterior designed with beautiful stitching detail, your loved one will stay warm, dry and stylish all winter.

4. For the multitasking guy. For the type who tackles winter head on – whether it's shoveling snow or scraping icy windshields – you'll want the Men's Neoprene Gloves from Isotoner.

With a durable exterior, sleek tech detailing, and an adjustable zip closure, they're designed to handle the cold.

Plus, a non-slip palm offers extra grip and SmartDri waterrepellent technology, to keep hands warm and dry in all kinds of weather, so that he can find comfort in any moment.

**5. For the busy guy who wants to be comfortable.** The Isotoner Men's Carter Microsuede Water Repellent Boat Moccasin is made with durable microsuede.

Not just a slipper, this versatile indoor/outdoor footwear doubles as a shoe.

The moisture-wicking lining and cooling gel-infused memory foam with super supportive enhanced heel cushion offer ultimate comfort, rain or shine.

**6. For the cozy homebody.** Make winter movie marathons and sleep sessions toastier and more restful with a weighted blanket.

After all, it's also important to stay warm inside. Research has found that weighted blankets may improve sleep quality, making this a great choice for those in need of some extra shut-eye.



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Experts say giving children books is the best gift of all

Season

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A book can inspire joy and stir the imagination, and even better this holiday season is the gift of sharing that book with your child.

"Turning the pages of a highquality, print book filled with colorful pictures and rich, expressive language is best," said Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, a pediatrician.

"While touchscreens and other electronic devices may be popular, they are typically passive or solitary experiences for children and do not offer the same benefits of interpersonal connection and relationship building," Navsaria added.

Starting from infancy, reading aloud helps build the foundation for healthy social-emotional, cognitive, language, and literacy development.

Sharing books helps with language development and vocabulary and gets them ready to listen and learn in school. And over the past decade, research has found that reading together helps foster positive interactions, strengthening the safe, stable, and nurturing relationships young children must have to thrive.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends reading with your child every day, even if only for a few minutes, and making it part of the bedtime routine. Each evening, set aside 20 to 30 minutes with screens off for sharing books.

Remember that the experience should be fun. You don't have to finish a story if your child loses interest and you can let your child choose the book, even if it means reading the same book over and over. You can also invite your child to "read" to you from a familiar book that they have memorized.

Navsaria suggests asking about the illustrations or what your child thinks will happen next. For example, you can say: "Try to find all the blue things," or "Show me all the things that can fly."

Point out colors, shapes, numbers, and letters and respond with enthusiasm to your child's questions and comments.

Local libraries offer a wide variety of children's literature, including fairy tales, poetry, and nursery rhymes, as well as non-fiction books on subjects children generally love, such as the ocean or dogs.

Follow your child's interests in choosing books. Children's librarians can help you with high-quality book selections on a wide range of topics.

And during the holidays, consider building your home library and reinforcing the value of great books by giving them as gifts.

"Books are great conversation starters. They're also just a lot of fun and can help create wonderful memories, particularly during the holidays when you're spending extra time together," Navsaria said.

By age 4, a child can typically tell you which books they want to share with you,

pretend

to read a favorite book aloud to you, and tell you how a story is like things they have seen or done. They may ask you questions about books you are enjoying together or "correct" you if you skip a word or page in a favorite book.

As children grow older, reading can help develop character and values that are important to your family. In fact, a really great book has the power to counterbalance negative outside influences and teach children important lessons as they grow.

"It might be a book on kindness after your child experienced or witnessed cruelty," Navsaria said. "It might be a book on expressing emotions after your child saw or heard scary news coverage, or maybe a book on understanding differences after your child saw someone who looked different than they expected."

The AAP and Reach Out and Read have compiled a list of books – organized by age and topic – to help you raise children who are curious, brave, kind, thoughtful, and aware of the world around them. You can find the list at healthychildren.org.

(STATEPOINT)

"Books are great conversation starters," pediatrician Dr. Dipesh Navsaria said. "They're also just a lot of fun and can help create wonderful memories, particularly during the holidays when you're spending extra time together. A shared reading experience, as a tender, magical and loving time spent with your child, is truly a gift. It speaks to the heart of what parenting is."



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## Nearly 60 percent of households buy holiday gifts for their pets

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 recent 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 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 excursions 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 during the holidays. (METRO CREATIVE)

For those shopping for gifts their pets will enjoy, there are numerous options that could please the furry members of the family this holiday season.

STOCK PHOTOS Gift Guide

# Tis the season of style and joy

## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CURRENT SHOE TRENDS

The holidays are all about spreading cheer, and what better way to do that than with gifts that bring both comfort and style?

This guide is your one-stop shop for finding the perfect shoes to keep your loved ones looking and feeling good all season long!

## STYLISH BOOTS

From sleek ankle booties to statement knee-highs, there's a perfect pair for every personality from brands like Timberland and Dr. Martens.

Chunky soles and bold textures are in this season, so don't be afraid to make a statement!

## COZY COMFORT

Looking for some cozy classics to keep feet warm this winter? Look no further than Ugg, Bearpaw, and Birkenstock. These brands have something for everyone, from plush sheepskin boots to supportive cork footbeds.

The holidays are the perfect time to



The holiday season is about creating unforgettable memories, and the perfect gift, including a pair of stylish, comfortable shoes, can add a touch of magic to the celebrations.

STATEPOINT PHOTO Gift Guide

kick back, relax, and stay cozy with these timeless favorites.

## CROCS AND JIBBITZ

Crocs are versatile all year round, and insulated options, especially the styles with a plush lining, are perfect for colder months.

Thanks to the endless options of Jibbitz charms, it's easy to add a splash of personality. Choose from charms that are festive or feature favorite characters or hobbies to create a one-of-a-kind pair that's perfect for the season.

## RETRO STYLE

Indulge in nostalgia and style with retro and Y2K looks from Adidas, Puma, or New Balance.

These iconic brands offer a modern twist on classic designs, making them the perfect choice for a thoughtful and trendy holiday gift.

Unwrap the joy of the season of style with thoughtful gifts that offer comfort and functionality by visiting rackroomshoes. com.

For one-stop-shopping, visit a Rack Room Shoes store, which offer more fun and exclusive accessories and stocking stuffers only available in store.

The two stores closest to this area are at Pleasant Prairie Premium Outlets and Gurnee Mills.

The company's website is rackroomshoes.com.

(STATEPOINT)





# Tips to keep yo finances in che

## Don't let the holiday season set you up for debt in 2025

The holiday season may be warm, merry, and bright, but it's also a time when it's all too easy to spend more than you plan to and rack up debt you can't manage.

According to Certified Financial Planner professionals, here's how to celebrate the season in style while positioning yourself for a financially healthy 2025:

## CREATE YOUR BUDGET

Take a look at your budget to determine how much you can earmark for holiday expenses. Do you need to cut back on any nonessential spending to afford the holiday season you desire?

Make a comprehensive list of all your expected expenditures, including for travel, hosting, decorating, gifting, and charitable giving.

Don't have a budget? A Certified Financial Planner professional can help you create one to stay on track with your financial goals during the holidays and beyond.

## **MAINTAIN YOUR CREDIT**

While it's fun to be extravagant and give big-ticket items that will wow your recipients, your holiday spending shouldn't harm your credit.

Keep an eye on your debt-to-credit ratio throughout the season and set reminders of when credit card payments are due.

If you purchase an item using a Buy Now Pay Later plan, put payment due dates in your calendar to avoid late fees.

### GNE WISELY

Many people make charitable contributions around the holidays. If you plan to give, do it in a way that offers a tax advantage.

From deductions to donating appreciated assets to using a Donor Advised Fund, a Certified Financial Planner professional can help you find a strategy that is good for you and for the cause you care about.

#### SAVE ALL YEAR

Diverting a small portion of each



During a season of festivities, financial planning may not be top of mind. However, smart spending habits can help ensure you enter 2025 in the black and if you haven't done so previously, as soon as you wrap up this year's shopping, begin saving for next Christmas immediately. GETTY IMAGES VIA STATEPOINT Gift Guide

paycheck into a special savings fund all year long can help ensure you're prepared to meet holiday expenses.

Once this current season wraps up, you can begin to plan for next year. A Certified Financial Planner professional can help you set this fund up and offer suggestions for maximizing these savings.

### STRETCH YOUR BUDGET

Stretch your holiday budget creatively. When shopping online or booking travel, find the best deals by using a browser extension that comparison shops.

Entertaining? Rather than providing every dish yourself, host a cookie exchange or potluck.

If you have a large extended family or circle of friends that holds a traditional gift

exchange, suggest a Secret Santa or white elephant exchange instead.

## MAKE RESOLUTIONS NOW

Whether it's to pay down debt or set up a retirement fund, you don't have to wait until the new year to get started on your resolutions.

Get a healthy money mindset now, so that come January, you'll have already established habits that move you toward your goals.

Working with a financial advisor to prep for the holidays can help ensure you have a stress-free season. Find your Certified Financial Planner professional, trained to offer comprehensive solutions for your unique situation, by visiting letsmakeaplan.org.

(STATEPOINT)

# HOLIDAY GIFT **IDEAS FOR**

Want to brighten the holiday season for the students in your life? Consider gifts that will ease the transition into the spring semester.

Here are few to consider:

## SUPPORT A MUSICAL JOURNEY

With 44 mini keys, the SA-81 from Casio is a great keyboard for both firsttime players just embarking on their musical education and accomplished instrumentalists.

A built-in metronome makes practice sessions a breeze, and features such as scale tuning, octave shift, and transpose help introduce musical concepts.

One hundred high-quality, built-in tones covering a range of instruments, including piano, wind, percussion, and acoustic instruments - along with 50 rhythm patterns in a variety of genres like pop, ballad, dance, and more - offer budding musicians a chance to experiment and express themselves creatively right away.

All housed in a compact frame, it's a great choice for young students, students on-the-go, and dorm dwellers.

## LIGHTEN THEIR LOAD

If you remember lugging around heavy textbooks during your own student days,



This holiday season, give students thoughtful gifts that will ease their life and make their schoolwork and extracurriculars more enjoyable. Among the many ideas out there are an e-reader, a sports watch and a graphing calculator.

GETTY IMAGES VIA STATEPOINT Gift Guide



consider lightening the load of your gift recipient with a high-quality e-reader.

Look for a model with note-taking features, adjustable lighting to protect eyes, and portability.

A color screen is also a good idea, as it will make diagrams and charts easier to examine if your student will be reading textbooks on the device.

## BRING THE WORLD OF STEM WITHIN REACH

With the advanced features of a nextgeneration graphing calculator, the fx-CG50 PRIZM can support students through middle school, high school, and into college.

With Natural Textbook Display and an intuitive icon menu.

students will find the calculator incredibly easy to use. Its 3D graphing and improved catalog functions allow for greater engagement and real-life application in the mathematics classroom, and a host of compatible resources available at casioeducation.com can set them up for success.

Because the model is approved for the SAT, PSAT, ACT, and AP tests, your gift will be helping them prepare for a bright future.

## HELP THEM KEEP TIME

Is your student an athlete? Whether they run track, do swim team, or tackle

contact sports head-on, a durable, water-resistant sports watch can help them track their speed and progress throughout the season.

## EXPAND THEIR WORLD

While many people today get their news by rapidly scanning headlines on apps, a deeper dive can improve literacy, expand knowledge, and foster an understanding of the world.

Consider gifting your student a subscription to a high-quality newspaper

or news magazine.

(STATEPOINT)





# There are many options they'll use and appreciate

Physical activity is an important component of a healthy lifestyle.

Exercise guidelines supported by the medical community indicate most adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity each week.

Individuals can take several steps to be

more active in their daily lives.

Some become gym enthusiasts, while others congregate to yoga studios or other activities. Some still prefer to exercise at home or outdoors.

When it comes time to shop for people with a fondness for fitness, gift givers can consider these ideas.

## UPGRADE A MEMBERSHIP

Do some research to learn where your fitness lover spends most time working out.



If it is a traditional gym, a kick-boxing studio or a H.I.I.T (high intensity interval training) establishment, speak with the staff to see if you can upgrade the member's plan to receive more perks.

For example, a base gym membership may only include use of the floor machines and weights, but another may include all that as well as access to massage chairs, spa services and more.

### PERSONAL MASSAGER OR MASSAGE PACKAGE

Working out muscles can lead to soreness each time a new milestone is reached. Help soothe those tired muscles with the gift of a neck, back and shoulder massager.

Or go a step further and purchase a few sessions at a massage therapy location near the recipient's home.

## INSULATED WATER BOTTLE OR TUMBLER

Staying hydrated is important when

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

When it comes time to shop for people with a fondness for fitness, gift givers can consider a variety of ideas, from items such as a smart watch or insulated water bottle to a membership upgrade or a massage. METRO CREATIVE *Gift Guide* 

 $\vec{\omega}$ 

working out. An insulated water bottle ensures that fitness fans can enjoy cold water or a sports drink throughout their exercise sessions.

There's even a water bottle that selfcleans using UV light to kill bacteria in the bottle.

## TREADMILL OR STATIONARY BIKE

If you know a loved one has had eyes on improving a home gym, a treadmill or stationary bike can bring the space to the next level.

And don't be intimated as there is likely home workout equipment available for every budget.

## NEW KICKS

Comfortable, supportive athletic shoes ensure workouts aren't hindered by sore feet.

Since shoe fit and style is a personal choice, it might be a safer bet to give a gift card to a popular athletic store or online retailer rather than purchasing the footwear yourself.

## FITNESS MONITOR OR SMART WATCH

It seems like everyone now has some sort of smart device, but if the person on



your list still hasn't made the switch to a watch that tracks various health data, then that can make for a perfect gift.

Smart watches and fitness trackers monitor steps and various health markers such as pulse, elevation climbed and distance and can even detect if a user has a burgeoning health problem. When pairing the watch with popular fitness apps, users can log daily activities and their diets to get a bigger picture of their overall health.

Those who prioritize fitness can benefit from any number of health- and fitnessminded gifts this season.

(METRO CREATIVE)





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