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GIFT GUIDE





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HOLIDAY SHIPPING INSIGHTS UNWRAPPED JUST IN TIME

In today's fast-paced, digital world, there are many gift-giving options for loved ones far and wide, from sending e-gift cards to their favorite shops and restaurants to creating custom video messages.

However, a new survey from Duck brand, a leading maker of mailing and shipping products, finds that the festive fun of sending physical presents isn't lost.

"We learned that most people – 98% – send at least one package containing gifts, and nearly half – 46% – typically mail up to three gifts throughout the season," says Natalie Guillaume, director of product marketing, packaging tapes, at Shurtape Technologies, LLC, the company that markets Duck brand.

"To make the process holly and jolly, we recommend planning ahead and purchasing high-quality supplies to ensure presents arrive on time and in one piece," Guillaume added.

Good tidings delivered on time

More than 60% of survey participants say they send their packages two to four weeks in advance of when they need to arrive.

Still, 43% express their greatest concern when mailing goods throughout the yuletide season is the parcel arriving on time.

Knowing they can't rely on the magic of Santa's sleigh to make a timely delivery, Guillaume suggests getting ahead of the holiday hustle by checking delivery deadlines for the busy season, then leaving a little leeway to account for delays due to winter weather or other logistical challenges.

Don't let tape get your tinsel in a tangle

When it comes to shipping, the wrong tape can turn anyone into a Grinch. Nearly half of people (45%) say tape not sticking well to boxes is their biggest challenge.

In this case, a heavy-duty tape will do the trick. Look for one with a wide temperature range performance, so you don't have to worry about damaged deliveries due to a frosty forecast.

Additionally, 40% of people have experienced difficulty tearing packing tape.

Duck Brand EZ Start Packing Tape, made with FrustrationFree technology, provides a simple solution for smooth, easy and quiet removal from the roll.

The easy-to-use dispenser is uniquely designed to eliminate the annoyance of losing the tape end, which 39% of respondents say is a struggle.

With these tips, you can send parcels on their merry way for a holiday season of stress-free gift giving.

(STATEPOINT)



Throughout the holiday season, most people send at least one package containing gifts, and nearly half typically mail up to three gifts. Make sure you get ahead of the holiday hustle by checking delivery deadlines, then leaving a little leeway to account for delays due to winter weather or other logistical challenges.

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Tune into gift ideas 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 their eye on an instrument upgrade? Swoop 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



There are many options for finding meaningful and useful gifts for the people in our lives who have a passion for music. Ideas include a musical instrument or keyboard, music lessons, headphones, and an audio interface that connects an instrument to a computer.

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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.

Masterclass membership

Sometimes there's no better tutor than the professionals who have been there. With a Masterclass 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.

(METRO CREATIVE)



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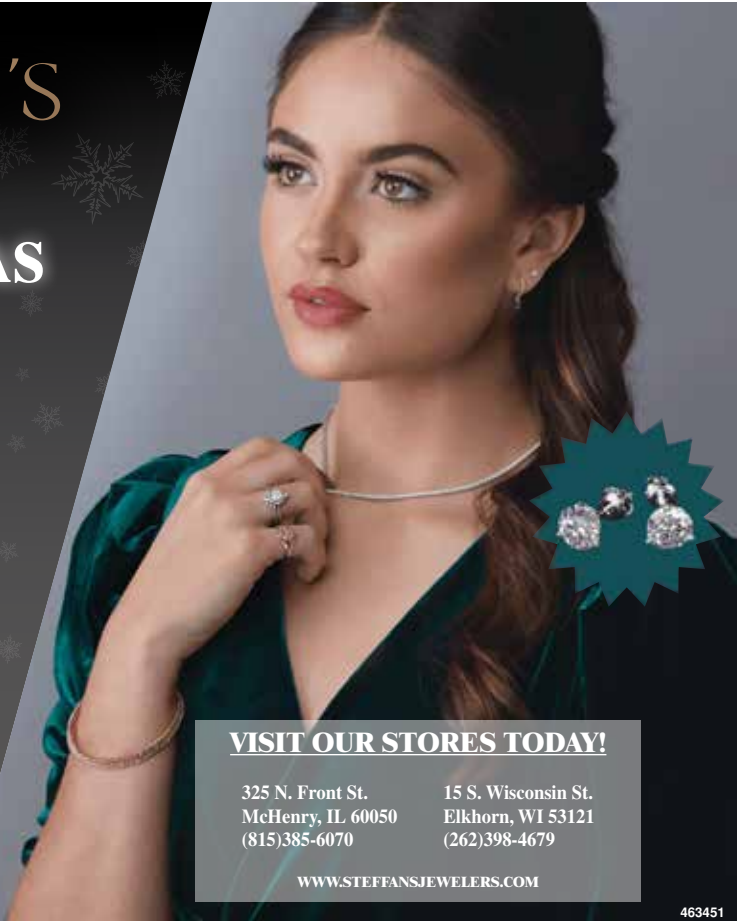
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Fun gift exchange ideas

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.

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 their 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.

Plan a white elephant gift exchange

A white elephant exchange is like a secret grab bag. Everyone brings a wrapped gift and 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 has already been opened.

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.

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.

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 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.

(METRO CREATIVE)



Those who want to add a touch of whimsy to gatherings with loved ones can consider a variety of creative and fun ways to exchange gifts.

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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 and Christmas Eve last year climbed 3.1 percent from the year earlier, according to the Mastercard SpendingPulse.

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

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

There are several budgeting recommendations shoppers who want to spend less and stick to a budget for holiday entertaining and gifting can keep in mind.

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Gifts for holiday hosts

They'll appreciate the thoughtfulness for welcoming guests to their home

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 last year 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.

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



There are some great gifts to consider for the hosts of gatherings this holiday season and while not necessary, they'll likely be touched by the thoughtfulness.

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Thoughtful gifts for aging parents

Children typically want to treat their parents to something special during the holiday season.

Parents do a lot for their children, and when those kids become adults, a desire to express their appreciation for Mom and Dad grows.

According to a recent edition of The Wrap Up: Snappy's Holiday Gift Report, the majority of Americans (64.2 percent) report they need help when it comes to holiday gifting.

They may want to carefully consider a recipient's interests, as the report also discovered more than half of all Americans want a gift that reflects their personal interests and hobbies.

When shopping for elderly parents, it may not be as simple as identifying interests, particularly if Mom and Dad are experiencing age-related health issues.

Consider these gift ideas that may be ideal for the aging adults in your life.

Cozy blanket

Older adults may have trouble regulating their body temperatures, which can translate to feeling cold a lot of the time. A new blanket or throw for a bed or to cuddle up with in a favorite recliner might be the perfect gift.

Family history book

Budding writers can interview their aging parents and jot down family stories. Those stories and anecdotes can be compiled into a book and combined with photos to make a family history log, which can be gifted back to the interviewee.

Gripping slippers

Slips and falls can injure aging adults and put them out of



Consider from numerous gift ideas that may be ideal for the aging adults in your life, all of which can be useful as well as thoughtful.

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commission for quite some time. Sturdy and secure slippers with anti-slip soles are good for getting around the house and making quick trips to take out the trash or get the mail.

Robotic vacuum

Keeping up with the household chores is easier with a robotic vacuum that automatically scours carpets and hard-surface floors. This eliminates having to wrestle with a cumbersome vacuum.

Key finder

A key finder can help adults find their keys if they are misplaced. Some employ radio frequency, while others utilize Bluetooth technology and can be paired to a smartphone.

Magnifying light

Older parents who like to do puzzles or close-up work like knitting or stitching can benefit from an LED lamp that also has a magnifying glass built right in.

E-reader

Avid readers may enjoy an e-reader because they don't have to find spots to

store even more books in their homes. E-readers can be customized so the print is the right size for the reader's needs. Also, the devices are lightweight and easy to stow in a bag.

Automatic card shuffler

Parents who are known card sharks around the community can use an automatic card shuffler to make card play even easier.

Resistance bands

Resistance bands are like large rubber bands that exert force to strengthen muscles and improve flexibility. They can help aging adults stay in shape in a low-impact way.

Dining gift cards

When parents do not want to spend additional time in the kitchen, they may opt to visit a favorite restaurant. A combination of a gift card to a favorite establishment as well as pre-paid taxi or ride share service ensures a good meal and a safe ride home.

Although they seem to have everything, aging parents still can benefit from some thoughtful gifts.

(METRO CREATIVE)

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 the big sale days.

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 the time.** Many people get hung up on perceived deep discounts from special holiday sales.

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 later 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.

(METRO CREATIVE)





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Tips for a healthy, safe holiday season

The holiday season is a joyous time of year, but it can also throw your wellness routines out of alignment. Doctors advise prioritizing healthy choices during this period, so you can start 2025 on the right foot.

The American Medical Association recommends taking these steps during the holidays:

1. Vaccines are a safe and remarkably effective defense from a number of serious respiratory viruses that circulate in the fall and winter.

To protect yourself and your family, get up to date on your vaccines, including the annual flu shot, as well as the updated COVID-19 vaccine for everyone 6 months and older.

Vaccines are also available to protect older adults from severe RSV. Tools to protect infants during RSV season include maternal vaccination as well as the monoclonal antibody immunization.

If you have questions, speak with your physician and take the time to review trusted resources, including getvaccineanswers.org.

2. Watch what you eat. Pay particular attention to labels and avoid processed foods as much as you can, especially those with added sodium and sugar.

Consider having a healthy snack before the big meal or offer to bring a healthier dish for the holiday spread.

Drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages and eat nutritious, whole foods like fresh fruits and vegetables alongside richer holiday fare.

3. Stick to your exercise schedule and prioritize physical activity during this busy time of year.

A good rule of thumb for adults is at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity.

Brisk walks, bike rides, hikes, and even family-friendly sports like basketball and touch football are good for heart health.

4. Use time with relatives to find out whether your family has a history of type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease and whether other family members have been told they have pre-diabetes.

With this information, you can better understand your risk and take charge of your health.

5. Prioritize your mental health. Factors like holiday spending and navigating time with extended family can bring on extra seasonal stress.

You can help manage stress by getting sufficient sleep, exercising, and seeking help from a mental health professional when you need it.

6. Make smart choices and plan ahead if you're driving. During the monitoring of a recent December, more than 1,000

Americans died in alcohol impaired-driving crashes.

Do not drive under any circumstances if you intend to drink. And if you are the designated driver, make a 100% commitment to sobriety.

7. Be prepared when traveling. Whether you're flying or taking a road trip, you might be tempted to grab convenient, unhealthy food for the journey.

Consider packing your own snacks, such as fresh fruits and vegetables or small portions of dried fruits and nuts.

8. Get your New Year's resolutions started early. Speak with your doctor or health care professional about quitting tobacco and nicotine use and declare your home and car smoke-free to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure.

Commit to getting exercise daily, even if it's just a brisk walk outside.

"Everyone's holiday wish is to be happy, healthy, and safe, but the season is often a time for overindulgence in food and drink, increased stress, and exposure to respiratory illness," says Bruce A. Scott, M.D., president of the American Medical Association. (STATEPOINT)

"The holiday season is a wonderful time to reconnect with family and friends – it's also a chance to reconnect with your physical and mental health," Dr. Bruce Scott says.

STATEPOINT PHOTO Gift Guide

How to master the art of last-minute shopping

It's estimated one in five people wait until December to start

Shoppers who wait until the eleventh hour to do their holiday shopping are in good company.

Consolidated Credit says one in five shoppers waits until December to start grabbing holiday gifts.

Although shopping early to land the best deals and avoid the stress of running out of time works for many people, there are those who do their best work when shopping is down to the wire.

If you're thinking of being a last-minute Larry or Lucy in regard to your holiday shopping, there are some ways to make late shopping successful.

- Don't downplay the power of gift cards. Some suggest that a gift card isn't an ideal gift because it doesn't require much thought or effort. But the numbers do not lie. A research report from the Retail Gift Card Association notes that 71 percent of people surveyed feel "very satisfied" when they get a gift card.

- Establish a plan. Even if you're



shopping at the last minute, that doesn't mean you should head out unprepared. Consider the recipient, which kind of gift might fit them best, and how much you're willing to spend. Then you can narrow down which store to visit.

- Download a shopping comparison app. Capital One Shopping enables consumers to comparison shop and accumulate shopping rewards. Online shopping is convenient and can be a viable option for those who waited until mid- to late-December to shop. Just be aware of shipping times and expedited fees to make sure the gifts arrive on time.

- Consider a membership gift. A membership for a subscription box, a wine or coffee club, or even a streaming music or

movie service can be great last-minute gifts.

- Skip the clothing department. Clothes are go-to choices for holiday gifts, but they can be particularly challenging to purchase. Size, cut, style, and additional variables are unique to each individual.

Since browsing clothing racks can take a lot of time you likely will not have, avoid clothes as last-minute gift options.

- Screenshot promo codes and coupon scan bars. If you've come across discount codes and coupons in your research, have them at the ready when shopping online or in person. Don't hold up the line trying to load a website or find a coupon on the store app, as it's likely those behind you are last-minute shopping as well.

Last-minute shopping for holiday gifts requires strategy and savvy.

(METRO CREATIVE)

HOLIDAY HOSTS • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

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, seasonal 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 for 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.

(METRO CREATIVE)



There are some ways to make late shopping successful including having a plan, skipping the clothing departments, and not downplaying the power of gift cards.

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