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Holiday Gift Giving Ideas To Save You Money

By Gregory Thomas

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It's that time of year again, time for traveling, decorating, holiday parties, family, friends, relatives and of course. . . . shopping.

How many of you simply whip out the credit card and start charging every gift you can find, only to dread the day when your statement arrives in the mail?

Or are you one of the few that save a little every month just to cover the holiday expenses when they come around?

Before you spend your money on the latest, hottest, newest gadgets, take a look at these options that will really save you quite a pocketful.

YOUR HOLIDAY LETTER

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Sending a yearly "wrap-up" letter to your family, friends and relatives is a great way to save time and money. Instead of buying expensive Hallmark cards and writing individual letters to everyone on your list, why not design your own holiday letter?

When writing a "wrap-up" letter, remember this is the perfect time to inform friends and relatives what's been happening in your family's life over the past year. Even if something important happened in your life back in February or March, some of your acquaintances might not have heard about it, so let them know.

After writing a rough draft, use your computer (or a friends) to help produce

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an attractive letter. You'll find programs such as Microsoft Word or Publisher with wonderful "wizards" that will walk you step by step through the process so you will have a beautifully designed letter in about an hour or two.

### SIMPLE GIFT IDEAS

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Sit down and take the time to think about what each person on your list would like to receive. Of course everyone would love to get tickets for a seven day Caribbean cruise, but very few of us can afford to spend that kind of money on a present.

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking of all the possible gifts that can be easily put together without the need to spend much money.

Know of anyone entering college? Put together a "care package". Fill it with all the basic necessities a college student might need (or want). Cookies, snacks, toiletries, wool socks, a new college student "manual", etc... Anything you think a young 18–21 year old student could use while away at school.

Do one of your relatives work in an office? Put together an "office pack". The key is in the presentation. Find a suitable container and pack it with office supplies, personalized pens or coffee mugs, magazines, far side calendar, crossword puzzle book, etc.

CREATE A BASKET

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Have you seen the decorative basket assortments that are sold around the holidays? You'll generally find them in malls from such chains as Hickory Farms or Sees Candies. Why pay \$30–\$50 for a basket of "goodies" that probably only costs about \$5 to put together? Put the basket together yourself, save a fortune, and even add a bit more creativity.

You can find baskets (straw usually works best) at any discount store or yard/garage sales. Then, simply line the bottom with a decorative cloth (ie: colored bandana, checked napkins, etc...), organize the appropriate items and trim/wrap with holiday decorations.

You can find all types of holiday arts & crafts ideas in books at your local library or on the Internet. The possibilities are endless. Here are a few basket ideas to get you started:

#### Coffee Lovers Basket

Assortment of coffees, mugs, stirrers, creme assortments, Sunday comics

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### Cookie Basket

Homemade cookie variety, chocolate/fudge toppings, funny napkins, cocoa mixes

### Traditional Jelly Basket

Small jars of homemade jelly, muffin/cornbread mix, spatula, butter & knife

### Sweet Tooth Basket

Brownies, cookies, small jars of candy, cocoa mix, peanut brittle, chocolates

### Pasta Lovers Basket

Jars of various pastas and sauces, Parmesan cheese, pasta ladle, strainer

### Fire Starter Basket

Pinecones, long stick matches, starter blocks, candle scents/oils, ash shovel

GREAT LINK – <http://www.stretcher.com/stories/981207i.cfm> Here's a link to great recipes on how to make peanut brittle, bath oils & salts, brownies, potpourri and more for your baskets

### Brownie/Candy Jars

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An attractive gift, perfect for friends, co-workers, and neighbors. A nice large sized jar filled with either brownies or candies. Attach ribbons or bows to the lid and decorate with puffy paint or simply glue colored pasta shells around the jar. Again, be creative.

Homemade Decorative Cookies

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Great teacher or babysitter gifts. Buy a cookie cut out pattern, add some colorful icing and a few ribbons with a nice card is a special holiday gift.

### Framed Collage

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Perfect for any occasion, great for friends or loved ones. Gather pictures of the person you're making the collage for. Look for pictures of various places you've both been and fun times you've shared.

Once you have your pictures, cut and organize them to make an attractive display. Glue them in place, decorate the frame and you have a gift that's a lasting memory. How can you put a price on that?

Homemade Ornaments

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Get a recipe for a hardening clay from any holiday crafts book. A child's foot or hand imprint creatively decorated make excellent gifts for grandparents or relatives.

This is something special that you can only give once. Your kids will quickly grow up.

### Family/Children Portraits

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An 8X10 of the family/kids is a perfect gift for grandparents or distant relatives you might not get to see very often. You can even make a holiday frame for it. Look for low prices at JC Pennys or Sears.

Magazine Subscription

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Who doesn't like to read magazines? Reasonably priced, magazine subscriptions make excellent gifts. Find out what magazines or interests they have and then every time your friend receives another issue, they'll think of you.

### TIS THE SEASON . . . . KEEP THAT IN MIND

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All too often, the holidays seem to come and go in a flicker of an eye leaving us wondering if we even had a celebration at all. Take the time to visit with others whom you do not get to see very often. Spend time with the elderly in your family.

Start a 'tradition' within your family that everyone, including the kids, can participate in. These will be your cherished memories of the loved ones in your life that no gift can replace.

Gregory Thomas, editor and writer for the <http://www.SavingSecrets.com> website. SavingSecrets.com offers FREE money-saving articles, a FREE bi-weekly "Money Saving Tips" newsletter and even a FREE Ebook download titled "Coming Up With Some Xtra Cash" just for stopping by!

How To Save Money On Christmas Gifts

By Maria Estarellas

How many times have you spent more that you could afford on Christmas gifts for your family and friends?

How many times have you bought gifts that weren't what you were looking for and on top of that, paid top dollars for them?

It has happened to all of us one too many times.

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Well, you can SAVE money on all your Christmas Gifts.

1. Make a list.

It's always convenient to make a list of all the people that you will be giving a gift to.

Make sure you know what their interests are so you get a gift that they will appreciate. It will make it special for them and for you.

2. What to buy for someone that has everything?

Baskets, candles, a good book or a store certificate can be the perfect gift for that special person that has everything.

3. Buying in advance.

Don't wait until the last minute to go Christmas shopping because you'll end up paying high prices for stuff you don't even like. This happens specially with the hottest Holiday Toys because a lot of people look for them at local stores and since quantities are limited, you won't find them unless you go Christmas shopping early.

If you decide to go a local mall, make sure you do it during the first two weeks of November. You'll avoid the majority of Christmas shoppers and you are guaranteed to find what you're looking for at lower prices.

4. Take advantage of Online pre-Christmas Sales.

Most stores offer deep online discounts (up to 70%) on toys, clothing, accessories, gifts, candles, and more before Christmas during the months of October and November. They even offer Free Shipping with your order.

5. Buy from the comfort of your home.

Every year, more people buy online to save time and money. By buying online, you'll be able to see every item on every gift category you're interested in without the hassle of searching a whole store or waiting in long lines, only to find out that what you're looking for is not available or is overpriced.

You'll also receive the items you purchased early, giving you time to wrap them in advance.

The Christmas Season should be spent with family and friends instead of worrying about looking for time to go Christmas shopping.

Have a great Holiday Season.

Maria Estarellas is the webmaster for

Holiday Gift Giving Ideas To Save You Money

– "The Complete Website For

The Whole Family". You'll find fun things for each member of your family.

If your looking for that special gift, visit

How To Save Money On Christmas Gifts

Online Gift Certificates

Gift Giving During Thanksgiving Adds That Special Touch

Successful Holiday Gift Giving Starts with a Plan

Personalizing Your Presents With Gift Baskets

Palmistry

Money Saving ideas

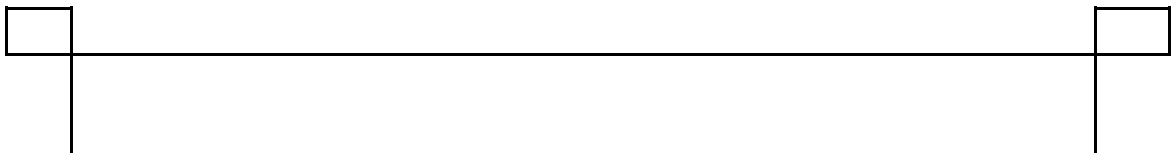
The Art of Kissing

The Classified List

147 Killer Epublishing Strategies



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