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The Trickiest Gift on Your Shopping List

By Carolyn Schweitzer

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Thinking of Giving Clothes as a Gift? There's one Recipient on your Gift List Who's Sure to be Thrilled.

When it comes to the art of giving, a gift of clothes is fraught with peril. We've all had encounters from the receiving end. We all have stories to tell. If you don't, you will, just give it time.

Mine started early. My grandmother, having survived the Depression, knew how to stretch a dollar. Buying clothes for her grandkids meant getting everything 3 or 4 sizes too big so we could "grow into it". We endured our baggy clothes, with the sleeves and pant legs rolled up, until we were finally big enough to wear them with dignity. By which time we'd more or less destroyed them.

Then there's my husband. Heaven forbid I should try to give the man a Polo shirt with an uneven hemline. Polos are usually made longer in the back to help them stay "tucked", but hubby goes un-tucked — always. He shuns any shirt that breaks his rule, no matter how subtly. For an otherwise easy-going guy, it's almost perverse.

If you must give clothes this season, there's one giftee on your list sure to look great in any outfit you buy him. He'll wear your gift with pride and appreciation, head held high and tail wagging.

That's right, your dog. Or your best friend's dog. It's so easy it's almost a no-brainer.

Dogs love any kind of attention you lavish on them. So, Spike will wear his outfit – whether it's cute or ridiculous – as soon as he sees how happy it makes his owner. Fido will eat up all that extra attention he gets from strangers. And Fifi might even learn to Vogue for the camera.

Clothes shopping for dogs is a lot like clothes shopping for babies. Unless you're going for practicality, cuteness is the bottom line. And it's easy to accomplish, given that any dog wearing clothes looks pretty darned cute.

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Choices in dog clothes range from winter sweaters to football jerseys and summer tees. You can get a set of flannel PJ's for bedtime or a terry robe for after bath. There's even an entire line of Harley clothes for dogs, complete with leather cap and studded collar. Dog costumes made for parties and holidays are just too cute for words.

If you really want your gift to be a hit with admirers, accessorize. Try a designer dog collar and maybe a cool pair of sunglasses—they make them just for dogs. And I recently heard that leg warmers are making a come back.

Got a mischievous sense of humor? Making the baby look too silly might be a no-no, but it's good clean fun when it comes to dressing up your dog.

There's really only a couple of rules you'll need to keep in mind when shopping for dog clothes. One is that if the dog in question is an avid chewer, you should avoid buying him anything too tempting. Shiny buttons, fringe, and feathers are examples that come to mind. An object that can easily be chewed off and swallowed becomes a choking hazard or can get stuck in the dog's digestive tract.

The other rule is that any dog, no matter how tolerant, will be more comfortable wearing clothes that fit. Proper fit typically requires measuring from the dog's collar to the base of her tail for length. Most garment's girth can be adjusted with velcro tabs, but could still be an issue with a barrel-chested breed such as a bulldog. Measurements are in inches.

Remember that a dog will never "diet down" into an outfit that's too small, or — unless you're shopping for a puppy or a pregnant female — "grow into" an item that's too big. (Sorry, Grandma.)

Oh, and one more thing—if you're handy with a sewing machine, you can make your own dog clothes creations. Just don't forget to include an opening for the dog to relieve himself. Don't laugh, it happens a lot!

Now, if you're shopping for your own dog, you're all set. If you're buying clothes for someone else's dog, I've got a few more tips for you.

Surveys conducted on the subject of gift preferences of men and women have shown that men prefer gifts that are more playful or practical. So, if the dog's owner is male this might translate into a doggie Harley jacket or a reflective hunting vest (more on practical clothing in another article!).

Women, on the other hand, prefer gifts that are beautiful, memorable, and personal—except if the woman is someone you don't know well. The more distant the relationship between giver and receiver, the riskier it is to give a personal gift. So, be they man or woman, if you don't know the dog owner very well, you probably shouldn't be buying dog clothes.

This leaves us with the woman who's a loved one, dear friend, or close personal acquaintance. It shouldn't be hard to find an item for her dog that's either beautiful or memorable or both, and it will of course be personal!

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Well, I hope you'll have fun picking out something nice for the canine on your shopping list. If you get a chance, send me a photo. I love cute doggie pics and I'll add them to my site. Think of it as a gift that I'm sure to appreciate!

© 2004, Carolyn Schweitzer. Lifelong dog-lover, power-shopper, and former family dentist Carolyn Schweitzer is owner and editor of

. If you need inspiration for dog clothes, visit her

at

. The site offers a wide range of choices for dog gift

shoppers, plus shopping and gift-giving tips. (Also advise on dog care and feeding.) She's always looking for new dog gift ideas and dog stories to share with her readers. You can reach her by email at netbrainer@verizon.net.

Online Gift Certificates

By Simon

Online Gift Certificates by Simon

Yes.

Holiday shopping season is here, again. Again, it is time to roll out your wallet and start worrying about your gift choices as well as your bank balance.

Choosing the right gift for the right people has become a hassle that people increasingly want to avoid. Gift Certificates from gift vendors that carry a wide variety of gift selections may be the answer to our prayer.

Happy Holidays!

Simon Lim, about

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