



2023  
**Holiday  
Gift Guide**



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# *Holiday Gift Guide 2023*

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# Age-based guidelines for buying toys and gifts

The holiday season involves making holiday gift lists and checking them twice, or even more frequently to ensure that gift-givers find the best fit for recipients. While age may only be a number in certain instances, when it comes to gifting, age should be a consideration — particularly when kids are involved.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that an estimated 86,000 children treated for toy-related injuries each year are younger than five. Toy-related injuries are preventable, and prevention often comes down to choosing age-appropriate toys for kids.

Toys can be choking hazards when small toys or those with small pieces are given to children who are too young to use them safely. Kids are curious and often put items in their mouths. Choking is the fourth-leading cause of unintentional death in children under age five, indicates The Emergency Center. Falls, eye injuries, drowning, and motor accidents are leading causes of gift-related injuries. Here's how to select age-appropriate gifts.

- Read the packaging carefully. Most toys and other children's products will come with an age range recommendation. While some kids may be mature beyond their years, it's

best to choose gifts that fall within the recommended range. This is particularly the case for infants, toddlers and any child under the age of five.

- Avoid fad gifts. Children often want the latest and greatest gadgets and toys for gifts even if they are not the smartest choices for their ages. Resist the urge to buy something just to be the "cool parent or grandparent," especially if it isn't age-appropriate. Mermaid tails became popular in recent years, and likely will see increased presence thanks to the home-viewing release of a popular live-action mermaid movie. However, they limit movement and can make swimming more difficult, potentially increasing risk of drowning.

- Provide safety gear. As children age, they may be more interested in gifts that appeal to hobbies and abilities. Scooters, bicycles, skates, and other items are popular among older children. These gifts should only be purchased for those with proven ability, and even then, accompanied with the appropriate safety gear. This can include helmets, knee pads and eye protection.

- Consider waiting before gifting certain electronics. Although children may be able to use devices safely, there are many who advocate for waiting to give young children



smartphones and tablets due to the consequences of excessive screen time. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry says children ages two to five should limit non-educational screen time to about one hour per weekday and three

hours on weekend days. Children should be encouraged to pursue healthy habits that limit use of screens, so gift-givers can look for gifts that help to this end.

Age-appropriate gifts ensure safety for the youngest people on holiday gift lists.

WISHING YOU

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# Clever holiday shopping strategies to save time and money



The holiday season is here again, which means that the time for shopping lists and gift-buying has returned as well. Shoppers long have relied on Black Friday deals to save some money and streamline shopping excursions. But now Thanksgiving Day sales and additional retail holidays like Plaid Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday have made it easier than ever to

score holiday deals. The following tips can make holiday shopping more fruitful.

### Know your prices

Shoppers who would do well on TV's "The Price is Right" can save money. It's important to have a general idea of what items cost, especially those that will be on holiday lists. Shoppers can set up price alert

notifications on the gifts they plan to buy to compare prices in advance of holiday sales. This way they will have a better idea if the Black Friday/Cyber Monday "deal" is just a markdown on an exaggerated price or if it's a legitimate bargain.

### Consider price-matching

Before shoppers run all over to a dozen stores in the name of saving a few bucks, learn about stores' price-matching policies. For example, Best Buy may be willing to give the same price on a printer if you can prove that Staples is offering it for \$30 cheaper. Keep in mind that many stores are even willing to match Amazon's prices.

### Utilize a shopping app or coupon aggregator

Online shopping is here to stay, and one way retailers provide deals is with coupon codes. Shopping applications can help shoppers save money and time. Some, like Rakuten, offer cash-back and instant discount opportunities, particularly during the holiday season. Others, like Honey, for example, are apps as well as browser extensions that will automatically search for and apply coupon codes on retailers' sites to ensure a shopper is getting the lowest price.

### Shop ahead and pick up

Be aware of retailers who offer a lower online price for merchandise than what the same item sells for in store. For example, a six-pack of socks may be \$9.99 when purchased online, or \$13.99 in store. If the store offers free pickup for online orders shipped to the store, then consumers can use this option to get the discount but avoid shipping fees. Plus, pickup kiosks generally are less crowded than waiting for the check-out registers.

### Buy now, resize later

Shoppers who can't find their needed size or color in clothing or merchandise can buy any size or color on sale day at the discounted price, then exchange a few days later for the item they need.

### Think beyond the usual retailers

Lowe's, Home Depot and even pharmacies have lesser-known, but advantageous deals as well. Don't overlook these retailers for holiday decor or stocking stuffers.

Holiday sales shopping is more budget-friendly with some simple saving strategies.

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# How businesses can make the most of Small Business Saturday

Sales and consumer holidays compete for shoppers' attentions every year between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Such events save consumers billions of dollars every year, but small business owners know it's no small feat getting holiday shoppers to part with their hard-earned money.

Competing for holiday shoppers is hard work, but those efforts can provide a big payoff. According to Finder's Black Friday Statistics 2022, 55 percent of men and 52 percent of women planned to shop Black Friday sales in 2022, when men planned to spend \$465 and women intended to spend \$300. If small business owners are concerned they can't compete on Black Friday, they can always look to Small Business Saturday, which encourages holiday shoppers to patronize brick and mortar businesses that are small and local. Competition can still be steep on Small Business Saturday, but the following are some strategies business owners can employ to make the most of this unique event on the holiday season calendar.

- Update your website. The Small Business Administration recommends that small business owners consider a digital makeover for their websites. Even though Small Business Saturday encourages individuals to shop in person, modern consumers typically peruse online offerings first. Updating an outdated website or simply reviewing all information, including product details, on the website to ensure it's up-to-date can help small businesses make a strong first impression with holiday shoppers.

- Promote Small Business Saturday. Though it's been around for more than a decade, Small Business Saturday is not yet the household name that Black Friday has become. Small business owners can drum up interest in Small Business Saturday by promoting the day on their social media channels. The SBA recommends business owners encourage shoppers to snap selfies and tag their businesses on their own social media accounts, which can increase engagement and potentially attract new customers.

- Sell and promote gift cards. Gift cards help national retailers generate substantial revenue each year, and there's no reason why small businesses can't get their piece of the gift card pie. Gift cards remain wildly popular, as a recent survey from the National Retail Federation found that 54 percent of participants identified gift cards as the most-wanted gift of the 2022 holiday season. Small businesses can offer discounted gift cards on Small Business Saturday and promote those efforts on their websites and via social media.

- Open early and close late. Small Business Saturday, which occurs on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, is a great opportunity for small businesses to start the potentially lucrative holiday season off on the right foot. The SBA urges small businesses to open early and close late on Small Business Saturday so they can capitalize as much as possible on this popular retail holiday.

Small business owners can embrace various strategies to make the most of Small Business Saturday.



## Avoid driving under the influence

Celebrations frequently involve entertaining guests or heading out for nights on the town to enjoy the company of others. Often food and beverages are part of the fun, and that includes alcoholic beverages, which may flow a little more readily during festive occasions.


Niznik Behavioral Health says crash fatality rates involving alcohol increase by about five times during holidays. Roughly 131 people die in crashes involving alcohol each holiday, compared to 25 deaths during non-holidays, according to data compiled

See **DRIVING** Page 8

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# Fireplace safety during the holiday season

Gatherings with family and friends are an integral component of the holiday season. Certain rooms in the house are on display more than others, with kitchens, dining rooms and living areas serving as popular places to congregate. Of course, fireplaces also serve as popular gathering spots in homes that feature them.

Lighting a fire in the hearth can make any space more cozy, but doing so comes with some hazards. Consider these fireplace safety tips in advance of the holiday entertaining season.

- Have the fireplace inspected and swept professionally. Prior to lighting the first fire of the season, ensure that a professional inspects the fireplace, chimney and venting to ensure everything is in good condition. The chimney also should be swept to remove excess debris and buildup that could pose a fire hazard.

- Keep items away from the fireplace. Wrapping paper, rugs, clothing, magazines, and the like should be kept at least three feet away from the flames, suggests the Ameri-

can Red Cross. Also, make sure decorations are hung securely and a safe distance away from the fire.

- Check your smoke alarms. Be sure the home has working smoke alarms on every level of the house. And keep a fire extinguisher close to the fireplace.

- Never burn wrapping paper. Wrapping paper contains additives, like dyes, that make it burn extremely hot. Do not think of discarding wrapping paper by burning it in the fireplace.

- Keep the tree a safe distance away. Although it makes for the perfect Christmas photo backdrop, Christmas trees and fireplaces should not be near each other. Also, the Christmas tree is not safe to burn in the fireplace after the season, as the wood has not been properly dried or seasoned.

- Use a screen on the fireplace. Make sure the fireplace is properly covered by a screen to stop embers from escaping when the wood pops and sparks. The screen also can help keep decorations and other objects from falling into the fire.



- Keep the fireplace clean. Promptly remove any ash and debris from the fireplace after it has cooled to improve indoor air quality and provide greater control over the next fire when it is burned, advises the

American Society of Home Inspectors.

Fireplaces bring warmth and add ambiance to a home, particularly during the holidays. But safety must prevail when lighting fireplaces.

## DRIVING

Continued from Page 5

for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System between 2013 and 2017.

The numbers continue to grow. According to MoneyGeek, driving under the influence-related fatalities were 23 percent higher in 2021 than 2016. Among the holidays with the highest rates of DUI, Independence Day and other summer holidays top the list, but impaired driving also is prevalent between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day.

It's perfectly alright to have fun in social situations. However, that fun should involve responsible behavior, particularly when consuming alcohol. Here's how to enjoy celebrations while also playing it safe.

- Take driving off the table. When plan-

ning social occasions, remove the need to drive entirely. Ensure the party location is within walking distance for guests, or at a convenient spot accessible by public transportation. Hosts can encourage guests to utilize taxis or rideshare services so everyone can leave their cars at home.

- Take the emphasis off of alcohol. Plan events that do not necessarily need to be drinking-heavy. Experiential events, such as escape rooms, crafting sessions, culinary demonstrations, and others can shift the focus away from drinking.

- Serve alcohol early. If alcoholic beverages will be served, have a cut-off time when these drinks no longer will be served. This way guests will have a chance to recover and sober up before leaving.

- Provide drink vouchers. Limit how much guests drink by setting a quota. Work with an establishment so that each party-goer

only gets a set number of drink tokens or tickets. When they're used up, then they no longer will be served.

- Make food a priority. Shift the focus from drinks to food. Those who have filled up on plenty of snacks or a big meal may be less likely to over-indulge.

- Change your venue. A gathering at a bar may set the tone that drinking will be prioritized. Look for party venues where drinking may not be allowed, such as church or school party rooms, or not as accessible, such as a BYOB restaurant.

- Always have a sober chaperone. At each event, one or more people should make the pledge to stay sober so they can ensure the safety of guests. This may mean driving them home themselves or arranging for transportation.

Festivities may include alcohol, but hosts and party planners should take steps to re-



duce the likelihood that guests will drive while under the influence.

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# Planning pointers for holiday hosts

Hosting is a significant part of the holiday season. From late November until New Year's Day, millions of people across North America welcome friends and family into their homes. Whether you're hosting a small gathering with locally based loved ones or welcoming distant relatives into your home for several days, the following are some planning pointers to ensure your home is ready and guests feel welcome this holiday season.

- Hire a local cleaning service. The holiday season can be hectic. Holiday functions at school, office parties, community events, and more fill up social schedules between late November and early January. Busy social schedules leave little time for house cleaning, which is a must before welcoming guests into a home. A local cleaning service can clean the whole house for hosts welcoming overnight guests or focus on a few popular entertaining areas if party guests will be going home at the end of the night.

- Get an early head count. Ask party invitees and prospective overnight guests to RSVP early enough to ensure you can accommodate everyone's needs. Additional seating may be required for holiday parties, while hosts may need to arrange for extra

bedding for overnight guests. The earlier you know who's coming, and potentially staying, the more time you have to ensure you can accommodate everyone.

- Rent items from a local party supply store. When hosting large gatherings, a local party supply store can be the place to go for decorations, seating, food trays and utensils, and more. Such establishments also may rent specialty supplies like outdoor heat lamps for cold weather parties or tents and outdoor tables and chairs in areas where the weather is warm during the holiday season. Hosts can typically rent everything they need to host the party, saving them the expense of buying items that may just sit in storage the rest of the year.

- Arrange for transportation. Whether guests are flying in from distant lands or local friends, relatives or neighbors stopping in for the night, hosts can arrange for transportation to and from their homes to ensure everyone arrives safely and makes it home without incident. Pick overnight guests up at the airport so they see a friendly face upon arrival. When hosting gatherings with local family and friends, encourage others to share how they intend to get home and recruit designated drivers if you



intend to serve alcohol.

Hosts can take heed of these planning

pointers so guests feel welcome and have a good time this holiday season.

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# 4 creature comforts to offer holiday guests

Overnight guests can make the holiday season feel that much more special. Spending extra time with loved ones is part and parcel of the holiday season for millions of individuals, and hosting overnight guests ensures hosts get quality time with friends and family members they may not see much of throughout the rest of the year.

Holiday hosts may want to go the extra mile for their overnight guests who traveled long distances to see them. With that in mind, hosts can provide these four creature comforts to make overnight guests feel right at home during their stay.

1. **Charging dock:** Just about anyone who has traveled over the last two decades has forgotten to pack a phone charger or left one behind at one point or another. A charging dock on each guest room nightstand can ensure no such fate awaits hosts' friends and family members.

2. **Fresh bedding:** It's customary to wash sheets after overnight guests leave so the next time loved ones are welcomed into a home the bedding is clean. But if it's been

awhile since you've hosted an overnight guest, wash the bedding, including sheets, pillowcases, covers, and, if necessary, comforters or duvets, prior to guests' arrival. The scent of freshly washed bedding can set a welcoming tone that guests will appreciate.

3. **Toiletries:** Stock up on extra toothbrushes and travel-sized accessories like mouthwash and hand sanitizer so guests who might have forgotten their own items don't feel like they have to impose and ask for a ride to the store to purchase new items. If kids are coming, be sure to purchase some spare kids' size toothbrushes.

4. **Privacy:** Privacy is perhaps the most significant creature comfort to offer overnight holiday guests. In homes with small children, hosts can check guest room door locks to ensure they still work and install replacements if they don't. In addition, in homes where this is possible, designate one bathroom as "guests only" during their stay. Privacy also can extend to where guests spend their nights. If possible, pick a room



away from the hustle and bustle of the house so guests can get some quiet time and rest during their stay. If that's not possible, hosts can make sure the holiday festivities quiet down at a certain hour each night so overnight guests can rest if they so desire.

Holiday hosts can take their offer of hospitality to the next level by offering their overnight guests some creature comforts that can make their stay that much more enjoyable.

## Tips to make overnight stays fun for kids this holiday season

Travel is a common component of celebrating the holiday season. In 2022, AAA estimated that 112.7 million people would journey 50 miles or more away from home between December 23 and January 2. It stands to reason that a similar number of people will find themselves on the road, rails or in the sky this year as well.

Holiday travelers recognize there is much to coordinate to make travel comfortable and convenient during this busy time of year. The holiday season is an especially exciting time of year for children, so special attention can be afforded to youngsters who are making holiday journeys as well. Holiday hosts can employ these strategies to ensure kids have as much fun as their adult

traveling companions.

- **Share your Wifi password.** Kids spend a lot of time on their phones and tablets. Parents may police those hours during school days, but during holiday breaks there may be more free reign. Hosts can alert their guests to the Wifi router name and password so that kids will be able to jump online without missing a beat.

- **Plan activities for all.** Children may feel left out if adults gather for drinks and chit-chat. Hosts can avoid such an outcome by organizing activities and engaging in conversations that everyone can be involved in. Game night, family movie sessions with snacks, or something similar can keep kids entertained.

- **Accommodate all kids.** Children are bound to have more fun when other kids are around. If possible, make room for as many

kids as you can. The kids can camp out in the living room or share a bedroom if space

is limited. Creature comforts might be what

See **OVERNIGHT** Page 11

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# 7 ways to organize and store holiday decorations

Decorating a home for holidays is quite popular. A survey from the National Retail Federation found that 53 percent of respondents said they were planning to decorate their home or yard for Halloween in 2023. Lombardo Homes polled 1,000 Americans in 2021 and 94 percent said they celebrate Christmas in at least some way, and 84 percent said they decorate. According to Time2Play, which surveyed 1,000 Canadians about their holiday decorating habits, Manitoba puts up Christmas decor earlier than any other province, with these residents taking out decorations 4.3 weeks ahead of Christmas Day on average.

With so many avid holiday decorators, individuals will need to find ways to organize and store their seasonal items. Holiday decor comes in many different sizes — from the smallest tree ornaments to illuminated statues for the yard or inflatable items. Figuring out a storage plan can take a little effort. These seven tips can help.

1. Purchase clear, similarly sized storage bins and shelving racks, hanging them where you plan to keep the decorations. Most people prefer an out-of-the-way spot, such as in the garage, attic or basement. Label each bin by holiday and put the bins in chronological order to make finding items

more convenient. Uniform bin sizes make it easier to stack and store.

2. Store smaller items inside larger decor items. Decorative baskets or wrapped boxes brought out for Christmas or Chanukah are ideal places to keep smaller tchotchkes like ceramics, dreidels, candlestick holders, or mantel hooks. Delicate items can be tucked into Christmas stockings or wrapped and stored in a fluffy tree skirt. Egg cartons can be used to keep small items safe as well.

3. Label everything so you will not need to dig through boxes or bins to know what is inside. This might be a good year to ask for a label maker for the holidays!

4. Use overhead or wall storage for holiday decor. Overhead spaces in the garage or basement walls can be good spaces to keep holiday decorations. Always keep bins and boxes off the floor so they are not vulnerable to damage related to leaks or floods.

5. Garment bags can protect larger decorations, such as wreaths, artificial trees or signs. If you have a large number of mechanical, illuminated or inflatable lawn ornaments, consider investing in a small shed where these items can be safely kept. Wrap the extension cords and any bracing stakes or strings used with the decorations so it's easy to find.



6. Utilize pieces of cardboard as well as toilet paper or paper towel tubes to keep lights and wires tidy. Tuck cords into the toilet paper tubes, and wrap lights around the cardboard to avoid tangles.

7. Each year, take inventory of your decoration collection and toss out anything that is damaged or has seen better days.

Storing holiday decorations will take some time, but once you establish a system, things will be simple year after year.

## OVERNIGHT

Continued from Page 10

adults are looking for, but the more kids the merrier applies to the youngsters.

- Offer some comforts reminiscent of home. Young children may be out of sorts sleeping away from their familiar spaces. Hosts can plan ahead and leave out some dolls, stuffed animals, a night light, or other creature comforts in spaces where kids will be sleeping.

- Relax the rules. Just as kids may have more freedom with using their devices, hosts can relax the rules of the house while



guests are staying over. Let your own kids and your guests' children stay up a little later and plan to offer a nightly dessert.

Overnight stays are part of holiday travel, and there are many ways to make staying over more enjoyable for children.



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