

Budget friendly gift ideas for youngsters

Written by Marcia Humphrey
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So, did you get all of your Christmas shopping done on Black Friday (the day after Thanksgiving)? **Why is that day called Black Friday anyway?**

I spoke to one of my girlfriends who said that between the doorbuster deals and the Macy's coupons, she scored big savings on Christmas gifts. If you were among those of us who did not go out and do battle over bargains and parking spaces, then I want to give you a few budget-friendly gift ideas for everyone on your list.

Infants - Okay, do we really need to buy gifts for infants? They should at least be old enough to appreciate the joys of tearing into a beautifully-wrapped present and throwing the paper as they go. If you are insistent on a gift for baby, splurge and buy the premium, extra-absorbent diapers. *(Online you can even find holiday-themed reusable diapers and covers.)*

Younger Children - Consider items that will sharpen their developing brains. Think puzzles, Legos, or books-which are great for kids of all ages. Also, look into a model car or train set. The children get the satisfaction of playing with something that they built. Finally, no kid would ever refuse the McDonald's gift card.

Tweens, Teens, and Young Adults - Movie passes are always a great option and can be used at theaters throughout the nation. In addition, you can get discounted movie passes at Costco warehouse clubs. To be even more economical, purchase gift certificates from Blockbusters or another nearby video rental store. Just don't forget the popcorn!

Neighbors - Purchase a low-cost holiday-themed cookie tin or a lidded plastic container and fill it with cookies or other homemade sweets. Another suggestion is to fill the container with a recipe card and all the premeasured ingredients to make something yummy. At this time of year, you can even find red and green plastic Ziploc-type storage bags. Your kids will enjoy helping with this project.

A Far Away Loved One - Send her your famous pound cake or homemade candy, her favorite bag of chips that are not sold in her area, or a framed photo that will bring a smile and serve as a reminder of home.

While discussing gift giving with my girlfriend, she told me how she likes to purchase gifts with the individual's tastes and preferences in mind. My other girlfriend finds it better to have a

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gift-giving theme-this year's theme might be sweaters for everyone. Whatever your preference, remember it's the gesture that is most important, not the size or price of the gift.

Decide how much you want to spend in advance, get that amount of cash, and stay focused. If paying by credit card is your only option, then you can't afford it. Buy gifts only if you can comfortably afford them, because the best gift that anyone can have at Christmas or any time is peace. ENJOY!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at low costs. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.