

# THE GATESVILLE MESSENGER

A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION  
SATURDAY, Nov. 18, 2023

## *Holiday* GIFT GUIDE

2023

### *Inside*

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ideas for the foodie in your life



# Toy buying tips when shopping for kids

Shopping for gifts for kids makes many shoppers nostalgic for their own childhoods. Few adults can forget the joy of finding the perfect gift under the tree on Christmas morning. Recreating that magic for a youngster can be as joyous for gift givers as it is for kids. That's especially so when shoppers make it a point to give safe, age-appropriate gifts.

Whether shopping for their own children or their grandkids, nieces or nephews, shoppers can keep these tips in mind to ensure they give toys that are as safe as they are fun.

### SPEAK TO MOM AND DAD FIRST

When buying for a grandchild, niece or nephew, shoppers should first ask Mom or Dad for suggestions. Parents will know which types of toys their children like, and they'll also know the child's level of maturity. Some kids may not be mature enough to play with otherwise age-appropriate toys, while others may be mature beyond their years and enjoy more complex toys than their age would suggest. Parents will know what makes a good toy and what doesn't.

### LEARN WHAT TO LOOK FOR ON LABELS

Toy labels are great sources of information, but shoppers must know what to look for. The American Academy of Pediatrics notes that toy labels include information about age-appropriateness (i.e., "Ages 3 & Up") as well as directions regarding how to use the toy. If the instructions seem a bit complex for the child the item will be for, look for something else. Children's toy labels also include additional information that consumers may not be familiar with. For example, toys labeled "ASTM F963" meet the latest safety standards from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. An "ASTM D4236" label indicates the materials associated with the art toy have been reviewed and deemed safe by a toxicologist. More information about toy label requirements can be found at cpsc.gov. The AAP advises that electric toys should only be given to kids if they include the UL label. That means the toy has been certified by the global safety certification company UL, LLC.

### AVOID CERTAIN FEATURES

The AAP notes that toys that

are loud, shoot objects into the air or contain small pieces pose a threat to children. Especially loud toys can damage children's hearing, while projectiles can increase the risk of eye injuries or choking. Toys with small pieces also pose a choking risk to young children who may try to put the pieces into their mouths.

### ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION

Consumers who are uncertain about the safety of a given toy, even after reading its label, should err on the side of caution and only give toys they're confident won't pose a safety risk. Even toys that may seem safe could be dangerous to kids who might otherwise seem old enough. For example, the AAP advises against giving kids under 12 hobby kits and chemistry sets. That's because such kits may contain dangerous chemicals that even pre-adolescents are not old enough to handle safely.

Shoppers must consider a host of factors when looking for safe toys for kids this holiday season.



# Popular songs to stream this holiday season

The holiday season is steeped in tradition. One of the most popular traditions is playing holiday music, which many retailers begin to broadcast over their PA systems shortly after people put their Halloween costumes in storage. The popular music streaming platform Spotify tracks the most popular holiday songs each year, and 2021 featured a mix of some newer songs and some all-time classics. According to Spotify, these five songs were the most streamed holiday tunes on the platform between November 1 and December 9, 2021.

1. "ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS YOU" - MARIAH CAREY
2. "LAST CHRISTMAS" - WHAM!
3. "IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS" - MICHAEL BUBLÉ
4. "JINGLE BELL ROCK" - BOBBY HELMS
5. "ROCKIN' AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE" - BRENDA LEE



Individuals who want to stream something a little more contemporary this holiday season can consider these songs, which Spotify reports are the five most-streamed holiday songs that were released over the last half decade.

1. "SNOWMAN" - SIA
2. "WHITE CHRISTMAS" - AMY GRANT
3. "SANTA'S COMING FOR US" - SIA
4. "HALLELUJAH" - PENTATONIX
5. "MERRY CHRISTMAS" - ED SHEERAN AND ELTON JOHN



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# Christmas stocking decorating tips and tricks

Hanging Christmas stockings is just one of the many traditions that fill the days leading up to Christmas. One theory regarding the origins of stockings says the tradition began when a poor widower who had three daughters worried over having enough money for their wedding dowries to help secure the daughters' futures.

The women, who had hung their stockings by the fireplace to dry, woke up to find solid gold spheres inside. This legend suggests kindly St. Nicholas visited the home in the night and left the presents, helping ensure the daughters could marry well, after all.

Christmas stockings were the first places where gifts were stowed, before under the boughs of Christmas trees became the primary spot for placing gifts. Then stockings were secondary vessels reserved for small trinkets. Today stockings are largely Christmas decorations rather than places to place gifts. Still, they're a key component of holiday magic.

When including stockings in holiday festivities, follow these tips for whimsy and more.

### UTILIZE STOCKING HOLDERS

Stocking holders are either metal or wooden devices that are placed on mantels. Hooks on the holders suspend the stockings. Just be sure the holders are sturdy enough to handle the weight of a stuffed stocking if you plan on filling it with goodies.

### DETERMINE YOUR STYLE

There are Christmas stockings that coordinate to just about any interior design style. From farmhouse to modern to traditional, choose one that fits with your aesthetic. That isn't to say you can't mix and match stockings if you prefer a more eclectic, homespun feel.

### ENHANCE YOUR STOCKING LOOK

If stockings are strictly decorative, enhance their look with a few tricks. First, use tissue paper or balled up

shopping bags to stuff the stockings and give them shape. Fill a small baggie with sand or florist glass and place in the heel of the stocking to balance it out and prevent the stocking from blowing around in the breeze.

### NO FIREPLACE; NO PROBLEM

Stockings are traditionally hung from the fireplace mantel, but if you don't have a fireplace there is no need to fret. Simply use ribbons to hang them from the bannister of a staircase, or hang stockings right on walls with removable hooks, or from sturdy shelves. You also can think creatively and hang larger stockings on a door like you might a wreath.

Whether they're decorative or functional, stockings can be an integral component of holiday decor in a home.



# Sports experiences make great gifts this holiday season



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The thrill of sports has inspired billions of loyal fans and athletes across the globe. Professional, collegiate, scholastic, and even recreational sports entertain people all year long. That popularity is something shoppers can keep in mind as they look for the perfect gift for the family sports fan this holiday season.

Many adults undoubtedly recall receiving sports equipment as a holiday gift when they were children. Whether it's a baseball mitt or a field hockey stick or a new ball, these gifts tend

to light up kids' eyes come Christmas morning. Adult sports fans may not need such equipment, but they might be just as excited to receive these unique sports experiences this holiday season.

### TICKETS

For diehard sports fans, nothing is better than going to the big game. Perhaps in acknowledgment of the growing popularity of following a favorite team on the road, many professional sports leagues now release team schedules months in advance of the

first game of the season. For example, the National Football League released its 2022 schedule in mid-May, despite the fact that the season does not begin until September. Shoppers can peruse schedules and circle a must-see home game or lay the foundation for a memorable trip by giving tickets to a road game.

### STADIUM TOUR

Stadium tours are another great experience the family sports fan will undoubtedly appreciate. Many professional sports teams now welcome fans to tour their

stadiums both in-season and during the offseason. These tours offer a behind-the-scenes look at stadiums, arenas and ballparks. Teams may even host tours on game days, making this a great stocking stuffer to pair with tickets to a game.

### FAN FEST

Fan fest tickets make an ideal gift for individuals who can be accurately described as "diehards" for their favorite teams. These family-friendly gatherings tend to happen in the weeks leading up to the start of a new season. A handful of current and former players typically attend fan fests, which are hosted by the team and typically include activities for adults and children alike.

### LESSONS

Holiday shoppers may have a sports fan on their list who still enjoys lacing up their cleats. For example, pro golf fans may still enjoy hitting the links themselves. In such instances, lessons from a nearby golf pro can be just the thing to make sports fans smile this holiday season.

Sports experiences make an ideal gift for individuals whose passion for a favorite team is a big part of their life.

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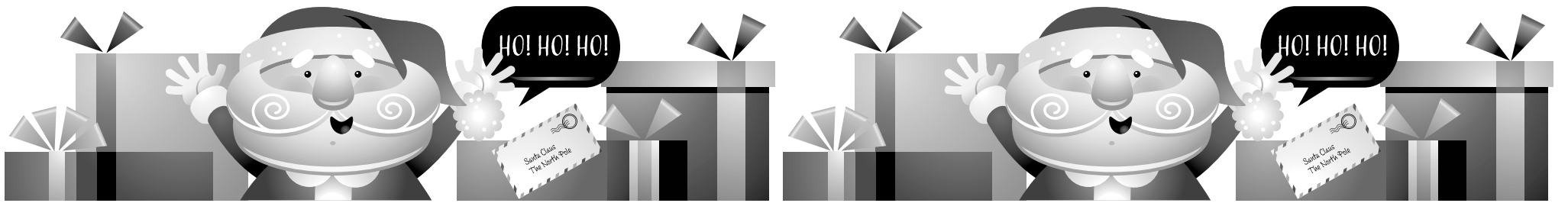
# Santa's Word Search

Y	I	E	R	Y	F	V	R	W	F	B	W	S	K	V	M	M	Y	P	I
G	C	D	I	T	F	O	I	U	R	E	A	Y	F	A	J	D	D	N	P
O	K	C	A	D	F	B	D	F	D	N	E	C	M	I	T	J	Y	N	U
G	R	W	T	S	B	L	C	O	T	O	R	P	K	W	S	D	H	A	H
A	F	S	O	U	G	N	Y	A	R	E	L	K	U	G	A	J	G	U	S
O	O	A	S	R	W	P	E	I	E	W	E	P	N	W	D	R	J	G	G
L	E	G	N	V	K	I	R	R	N	V	C	I	H	O	W	E	D	H	D
T	D	L	P	N	B	S	T	F	E	G	K	F	V	G	I	E	D	T	R
Y	R	S	O	I	O	F	H	I	K	C	R	J	I	T	N	D	V	Y	A
M	T	S	D	P	J	B	L	O	O	Y	O	F	E	M	T	N	A	U	E
F	N	B	A	B	H	E	P	T	P	A	T	M	C	J	E	I	V	F	B
H	R	T	G	M	B	T	S	K	T	S	A	G	I	E	R	E	E	L	N
O	S	S	S	G	T	W	R	H	T	Y	R	C	N	I	G	R	K	H	D
O	B	T	C	H	D	S	G	O	K	W	A	D	A	Y	W	D	A	L	D
S	S	O	R	R	G	I	I	P	N	Y	E	N	M	I	H	C	L	Y	J
U	H	O	A	T	N	I	U	R	A	E	Y	Y	R	S	L	Y	F	T	V
A	C	B	G	D	O	D	E	Y	H	L	L	A	K	H	D	J	W	H	J
L	L	U	I	A	B	Y	E	L	L	C	T	V	K	Y	F	N	O	U	L
C	M	M	F	E	O	T	S	O	S	R	M	G	E	T	H	V	N	U	M
C	R	A	U	Y	B	E	J	M	W	D	S	G	G	S	V	E	S	V	U

## WORDS

- BEARD
- BELIEVE
- BOOTS
- CHIMNEY
- CHRISTMAS
- CLAUS
- ELVES
- FLYING
- GIFTS
- JOLLY
- MIDNIGHT
- NAUGHTY
- NICE
- NORTH POLE
- REINDEER
- RUDOLPH
- SANTA
- SLEIGH
- SNOWFLAKE
- STOCKINGS
- TOYS
- TREE
- WINTER
- WORKSHOP

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.



*Wishing you abundant happiness, health and good fortune this Thanksgiving and always!*



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# Last-minute holiday shopping tips

Though devotees of early holiday shopping do not hesitate to point out how convenient it can be to get all their gifts long before the arrival of Chanukah and Christmas, scores of shoppers still wait until the last minute to begin checking names off their lists. It might be beneficial to shop early, but it's easy to procrastinate.

Last-minute holiday shopping might not be as enjoyable a custom as family dinners or office parties, but scrambling to find the right gift in the waning days of the holiday season is a familiar situation for millions of shoppers. Shoppers who find themselves with some last-minute shopping on their to-do list can utilize these tips to make the frantic search for the right gift go smoothly.

## WORK WITH STORE PERSONNEL

If a shopping list is lengthy but the time before the holiday arrives is dwindling, speak directly with store personnel, who may offer suggestions but can also help shoppers find what they need. In-person shoppers can speak with a store clerk immediately upon entering a store, while online shoppers can utilize chat functions on retailers' websites for help finding something that's in stock and deliverable before the big day.

## EXPECT COMPETITION

Though online shopping would seemingly make last-minute shoppers relics of a bygone era, that was not really the case in 2022. A

survey of more than 1,000 shoppers conducted by the retail industry publisher Best Black Friday found that just about 16 percent of consumers estimated they would finish their shopping during the week of Christmas. Last-minute shoppers who want to avoid crowds should consider shopping during off-peak hours, such as on weekday mornings and afternoons when most people are working.

## SHOP LOCAL

Last-minute shoppers may be flocking to malls and busy downtown shopping districts as they hurry to get gifts for friends and family members with different interests. Shopping at small, local businesses can help last-minute shoppers avoid such crowds. And with less on their shelves and smaller storage rooms, small business owners and their staff also tend to know their inventories inside and out. That can ensure a shopping trip is not spent wandering numerous aisles in search of the right gift.



## BAG IT, DON'T WRAP IT

Shoppers who wait until the very last minute likely won't have time to wrap all the gifts they pick up for loved ones. Gift bags conceal gifts just as well as wrapping paper, but it takes a fraction of the time to place a gift in a bag as it does to wrap it in paper. Quality gift bags also are reusable, which can appeal to anyone looking

to create less waste this holiday season.

## DON'T FORGET FOOD

If it's truly impossible to find something late in the season and a gift card feels too impersonal, give the gift of food. Adult recipients also can be gifted a bottle of wine or another spirit that can be enjoyed during a holiday meal. Shoppers skilled in the kitchen

can whip up a homemade treat, while those without such talents can give a store-bought delicacy or even a subscription to a monthly food club or service.

Last-minute shopping may look different than it used to, but scores of shoppers still wait to buy gifts for their loved ones. A handful of strategies can simplify last-minute shopping.

# Great gifts for the family foodie

Food features prominently throughout the holiday season. Family meals around the holiday dinner table are a cherished tradition in millions of households, and food also plays a central role during seasonal gatherings with friends and colleagues. Food also can feature prominently throughout Chanukah and on Christmas Day, particularly if a loved one qualifies as a full-fledged foodie.

Many families feature at least one foodie. Foodies always know the best place in town to grab a bite or when a trendy new restaurant will open its doors. But such individuals also enjoy making meals at home,

and the following gift ideas can make this holiday season more flavorful for the family foodie.

## TABLETOP FIREPIT

Shoppers who want to impress their food-loving loved one with something truly unique can give a tabletop firepit. Safe for indoor use, tabletop firepits enable s'mores-loving foodies to indulge in a traditionally summertime favorite all-year-round. Tabletop firepits are small enough to be stored on a kitchen countertop or in a cabinet. When in use, the s'mores-friendly accessory is smokeless, removing perhaps

the lone disadvantage to making this beloved treat.

## CLUB SUBSCRIPTION

Monthly subscriptions are a gift that can keep on giving all the way until next holiday season. Sweets lovers will undoubtedly appreciate receiving a box of fresh chocolates each month, while those with more unique tastes may anxiously await the day their monthly shipment of pickles arrives at their doorstep. The options are endless, ensuring there's a monthly subscription out there to tickle every foodie's fancy.

## SAUCE SAMPLER

Amateur sauciers may find inspiration in a sauce sampler set. Sampler set options abound, so shoppers can find something for foodies who love a spicy sauce, something more sweet or even in between. Of course, sampler sets also provide a range of sauces, making them ideal for foodies who want something spicy tonight before pivoting to a sweeter dish tomorrow. Flavored olive oil sampler sets also can be a great gift for cooks who love to experiment with new flavors.

## CHARCUTERIE BOARD AND KNIFE SET

Foodies who love to host their fellow food fanatics will no doubt fall in love with a new charcuterie board and knife set. A 2023 report from Kroger revealed that the supermarket chain expected charcuterie boards to remain popular over the course of the year. That popularity makes sense, as anything from meat to cheese to fruit to crackers has a home on a charcuterie board, making the item especially appealing to foodies who routinely share their homes and love of food with friends and family.

## ESPRESSO MAKER

Of course, foodies aren't just about food. Beverages also figure prominently in many foodies' lives. A high-end espresso maker can ground fresh beans and brew multiple cups in no time at all, making it an ideal addition to any foodie's culinary arsenal.

Food is a vital component of the holiday season and can even be incorporated into holiday shopping.



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