

# Holiday Shopper



## Less stuff can equal more fun!

This clutter-free gift guide makes the season even brighter

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SPECIAL TO THE ENTERPRISE

Whether the economic slump has directly touched your life or not, there is nothing as demeaning as realizing that the gift you just gave a loved one is destined to become their unwanted clutter. The key to successful gift-giving is to be honest with yourself about how well you know the recipient. A book or CD for your spouse is a safe bet, but risky for your child's teacher. Even for a close family or friend, it pays to do your homework.

There are a few material items mentioned here for which caution is urged. These may be given, provided they come with permission from the giver to pass it on when it's appropriate; otherwise, the recipient might feel responsible to keep it forever because you gave it to them.

With that disclaimer in mind, here are the top 10 ideas for clutter-free gift-giving this holiday season, plus a must-do bonus idea.

### 1. Entertainment

Whether it's a one-time pass or a season ticket, once you've clarified the recipient's taste, go grab the gift of admission to the movies at Regal or Varsity Theatre, Mondavi Center, Davis Musical Theatre Company, Woodland Opera House, Palms Playhouse in Winters or a local production of "The Nutcracker."

For more hands-on entertainment, give a membership or day pass to Explorit Science Center. Don't forget some of the best entertainment in the area may come to your recipient via a promise for an upcoming show by Pamela Trokanski, Davis High School's drama department or the Acme Theatre Company.

### 2. Charity

For any cause near and dear to your friends and family, there's almost certainly a charity. A note from you and the charity likely will state that a donation in their name has been made. Think outside the box — in addition to those great international charities, like Heifer Project and Smile Train, keep in mind our many local charities like the Davis Schools Foundation, the Blue and White Foundation, STEAC, Pine Tree Gardens, the Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Center, Davis Community Meals and Suicide Prevention, to name a few.

### 3. In-home services

Whether your loved ones live near or far, and whether they own or rent, everyone could use a little professional help. Many service professionals will work by the hour to solve those problems of home maintenance. How about a gift of a cleaning service, home handyman, professional organizer, window washer, interior room painting, computer/electronic services, carpet cleaning or gutter cleaning? Maybe you need to put this one on your own wish list.

### 4. Consumables

Of course your homemade cookies and jam are a great gift! But for those of us who are a little less domestic, fear not. It's easy as pie to order



Gifts that people can eat and share for the holidays, like this basket featuring wine and candy, are well-received.

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Movie tickets make a great, clutter-free gift for people of all ages.

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some luscious edibles locally or online. You may extend the giving throughout the year and order the cupcakes- or nuts-of-the-month.

Better yet, challenge yourself to keep it fresh and visit the Farmers' Market or a local fruit stand for the freshest ingredients possible. How about some full-bodied Rominger West wine presented with some locally made cheese? Or perhaps you'll pair up a homemade treat with a store-bought staple, such as your zesty lemon bars with some fair trade coffee. Remember to do your homework and know your recipient well. That sugar-filled candy is not likely to be appreciated by your neighbor who is diabetic.

### 5. Pampering

A short bike ride to downtown Davis will take you on a tour of a bountiful selection of salons just waiting to pamper your gift recipient. Better yet, find out their favorite salon and purchase a gift certificate for a massage, facial, haircut, pedicure or manicure. Want a little more adventure? Check out some choices in the nearby Napa Valley like the mud baths, sulfur soaks or volcanic ash and peat-moss bath for something entirely different.

### 6. Homemade coupons

What's your gift of time? Is it baby-sitting, a date with your kids, grandma or spouse, pet-sitting, helping clean the garage, or just taking a load to the dump? Perhaps you're an expert who can provide specialized services such as painting, gardening, organizing or programming that new wireless printer.

For your own children, this is a wonderful opportunity to give a privilege for those developmental "firsts," such as a coupon for her first sleepover party, ear-piercing, or staying up until midnight on New Year's Eve. The secret to successful homemade coupon gift-giving is to set a date and be sure the event really takes place.

### 7. Practical gifts

A little investigative work will give you a peek at what a person really needs and wants. Every teacher has a list of much-needed classroom supplies, the cost of which comes out of their own pocket. He or she probably needs a case of tissues and hand sanitizer more than an apple paperweight. Who couldn't use some new stationery and a book of "forever" postage stamps?

Maybe a fresh stack of bath towels, a flash drive or accessories for big-ticket items they already own; photo paper, printer cartridges or a charging station for all of those gadgets. If knowing what someone would appreciate is a challenge for you, take the safe route and give a gift card — you can't go wrong with the new downtown Davis gift card — savings bonds or cold, hard cash.

### 8. Books, CDs, subscriptions

This popular category of gifts is terrific, assuming you know what book or CD your recipients have been wanting. Or play it safe and extend a subscription for The Davis Enterprise, a national publication or a favorite magazine. When in doubt, a gift certificate to iTunes, a local bookstore or music store will be well-received.

For the couch potato, get creative and pay for a year's membership to a video store, Netflix or the local cable company (remember to throw in some popcorn). And nothing says "I love you" to a teen like an unlimited texting plan.

### 9. Travel-related or trips

Depending on whether you want to spend a little or a lot, how about the gift of

travel or travel-related services? Spring for an Amtrak train trip to the Sacramento train museum, Travelocity gift certificate, or one night at a hotel, just for the fun of it. If you're lucky, you may be helping friends or family with a trip they already are planning to Lake Tahoe, San Francisco, Apple Hill or Disneyland. A gift of cash toward specific expenses — like a dinner or ski rentals — would be very welcomed.

If your pals are inclined to travel by car, how about an oil change and tire rotation, a car wash, a car DVD player, an emergency car kit or a membership to AAA?

*The secret to successful homemade coupon gift-giving is to set a date and be sure the event really takes place.*

### Gift don'ts

Here are some tips to remember about what *not* to give as gifts.

**Clothing.** Unless the recipient is your young child or someone who has personally told you she wanted that item, it's safer to stay away from giving clothing.

**Perfume or after shave.** Even if you know what they wear, a bottle of cologne or perfume may last for years. If you don't know what they wear, it's such a personal choice that it's best to resist the urge to send a scent.

**Home décor items.** Whether it's a ceramic figurine or a cute wall plaque, let your loved ones decorate their own home. If the item is not to their taste, they are left with the burden of displaying it in their homes or sending the items packing ... either way they feel bad!

**Specialty gadgets** that neither were requested or in keeping with one's lifestyle. The ice cream maker or the chair massager may seem like a good idea in the store, but many of these gadgets are space-heavy and seldom used once the novelty has worn off. Thrift stores are overloaded with barely used bread machines and cheap espresso makers.

Keep in mind, more fun, less stuff.

### 10. Classes and adventure

An exciting new experience, or continuing a beloved practice is at your fingertips here in the Davis area, or probably wherever your loved ones live.

The creative classes and establishments are too numerous to mention, but here are a few gems to think about: The Davis Art Center, UC Davis' Outdoor Adventures, Rocknasium, city of Davis Parks and Community Services, Fleet Feet's Running for Women and the Davis Senior Center offer things like classes in kayaking, swimming, dance schools, gymnastics, qigong, stress reduction, running, yoga, martial arts, fencing, singing or lifesaving. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

For more local adventure, a few brave souls may want to take to the air with a hot-air balloon ride, skydiving or bungee jumping. If you fear your friend may be shy, try something new together.

### Bonus: Fan mail

The *must* do bonus gift is "fan mail." Take time to tell a teacher, mail carrier

*An exciting new experience is at your fingertips ... If you fear your friend may be shy, try something new together.*

Send "fan mail" to people you appreciate this holiday season.

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or nephew what you appreciate about him or her. If the person is an educator or service provider, learn his supervisor's name, and be sure to send along a copy.

A letter of appreciation or a heartfelt love-letter costs you nothing except sincerity. For all of the people on your gift list, what better gift is there than an expression of true gratitude?

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