



*A Marshall Advocate publication courtesy of many area merchants.*

# Gifts that they'll actually use this winter

Staying warm during the cold winter months is a top priority for many, which is why holiday gifts that help in this endeavor are always a sure-fire hit!

Here are some head-to-toe gift ideas that will add comfort to the season and show your loved ones you care.

1. Functional Gloves for the Fashionista. From navigating with GPS to queuing up a playlist, your loved one relies on her devices all the time outdoors. That's why her gloves should offer touchscreen-capable fingertips so that even in frigid temperatures, she can stay cozy and connected. Enter the Women's Mya Faux Fur Cuff Gloves from Isotoner, where style meets practicality. With SmarTouch technology for superior touchscreen capability and SmartDri water-repellent features that make rain and snow roll right off, elevating winter weather ensembles has never been easier!

2. On-the-Go Coziness for the Fashion Forward. Staying warm and stylish with this



Stretch Microsuede Gloves. Made from super soft and stretchy microsuede fabric, these slim-fitting contoured gloves feature a velour interior and plenty of stretch, providing warmth and flexibility with none of the bulk. With touchscreen-enabled

must-have beanie and scarf set is easy. Featuring a waffle knit beanie with Levi's iconic red tab and a soft buffalo plaid scarf, this duo is perfect for on-the-go coziness and will keep your loved one comfortable during all their favorite winter activities. Designed for the fashion-forward, it's an ideal gift for anyone looking to blend warmth with timeless style.

3. For the Best Dressed Friend. Ultimate comfort and style go hand in hand with these Women's Shortie

fingertips and a water-repellent exterior designed with beautiful stitching detail, your loved one will stay warm, dry and stylish all winter.

4. For the Multitasking Guy. For the type who tackles winter head on—whether it's shoveling snow or scraping icy windshields—you'll want the Men's Neoprene Gloves from Isotoner. With a durable exterior, sleek tech detailing and an adjustable zip closure, they're designed to handle the cold. Plus, a non-slip palm offers extra grip and SmartDri

water-repellent technology, to keep hands warm and dry in all kinds of weather, so that he can find comfort in any moment.

5. For the On-the-Go Guy Who Wants to Be Comfortable. The Isotoner Men's Carter Microsuede Water Repellent Boat Moccasin is made with durable microsuede. Not just a slipper, this versatile indoor/outdoor footwear doubles as a shoe. The moisture-wicking lining and cooling gel-infused

memory foam with super supportive enhanced heel cushion offer ultimate comfort, rain or shine.

6. For the Cozy Homebody. Make winter movie marathons and sleep sessions toastier and more restful with a weighted blanket. After all, it's also important to stay warm inside. Research has found that weighted blankets may improve sleep quality, making this a great choice for those in need of some extra shut-eye.

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Breakfast with Santa: Lanie, Lexi, Livi and Conner Strohm. Photo by Gary Strohm.

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# Hack your holiday menu: smart swaps for allergy-friendly feasting



Planning to host a holiday feast but worried about accommodating different dietary needs? Gone are the days of serving bland alternatives or making multiple separate meals. With some smart planning, you can create a stunning holiday spread that naturally works for everyone at your table.

Below is the ultimate cheat sheet for transforming traditional recipes into home-cooked, organic and allergy-friendly alternatives that taste as good as they are convenient:

- Hosting someone who is lactose intolerant? Use coconut milk instead of heavy cream as the base for creamy

dishes.

- Have a guest that doesn't eat meat? Try substituting turkey or ham with Amy's Kitchen Vegetable Pot Pie or Family Size Vegetable Lasagna. They are both savory and filling.

- For those with gluten allergies, swap wheat flour cup-for-cup with gluten-free flour in most baked goods.

- Tired of the same casseroles year after year? Say hello to Amy's Kitchen's new gluten-free Aged Cheddar Mac & Cheese. It offers all the comfort with zero regrets.

- For the ultimate holiday host hack, stock your pantry with allergen-free soups for those "Oh, you're vegan?" moments. Amy's Kitchen offers many delicious options that are gluten free and dairy free, from a Vegetable Jambalaya to a hearty 3 Bean Vegetable Chili.

The best part? Your guests without dietary restrictions

you. Want more inclusive feast ideas? Follow @amyskitchen on Instagram for your daily dose of food inspiration.

Remember that the best holiday gift is everyone actually getting to eat the food you served. By thinking of dietary needs as a chance to explore new flavors, you can create a holiday spread that goes from "Sorry, you can't eat that" to "Seconds, anyone?"

*This article published with permission of StatePoint Media.*

won't even realize they're enjoying allergen-free dishes! These alternatives are so delicious that everyone will be too busy savoring the meal to play "spot the substitute."

Offering allergy-friendly options has never been more convenient, as Amy's Kitchen products are available at virtually every supermarket near



Holly Days Christmas Market: Carly Foley of Marshall - Outlaw Jewelry. Photo by Gary Strohm.

## Upgrade your gift wrapping

Just by adding one embellishment, it can transform your gift wrapping into something elegant, quirky or fun. The options are endless: a twig, an

ornament, a rhinestone buckle. What makes it fun is the scale (oversize can feel dramatic; tiny can be sweet) and the relationship between the

object and the paper. Try some of these fun embellishments.

See Wrapping on page 12

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# Christmas Price Index 2024 reflects wage growth and rising service prices

On the first day of Christmas, holiday gift giving begins with the traditional gift of a Partridge in a Pear Tree. By

the first day of January, True Love pays the bill.

Each holiday season, the PNC's Christmas Price Index

tabulates the price to gift all the items in the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas," and this year, that figure amounts to \$49,263.47, a 5.4% increase from 2023.

PNC's Christmas Price Index mimics the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) Consumer Price Index, which mea-

sures the average change in prices consumers pay for goods and services over time. Notably higher in 2024 than the BLS' CPI, which increased 2.4% year over year, PNC's index reflects wage growth in the service industry as the primary driver of the overall higher price tag.

"Believe it or not, we're still seeing the cause and effect of the pandemic-inflation hangover, even nearly five years later," says Amanda Agati, chief investment officer of PNC's Asset Management Group. "With years of steep price increases, we'd think inflation has nowhere to go, but we'd be wrong."

#### Services Over Goods

The service-based economy is represented by the last four gifts in the index – the Ladies Dancing, Lords-a-Leaping, Pipers Piping and Drummers Drumming. They're traditionally priced based on the cost to hire various performers and musicians. The Ten-Lords-A-Leaping, at \$14,539.20, is the highest priced gift in the index for the third straight year. Overall, the service-sector gifts rose in price by 7.9% in 2024.

This rise of service-sector prices reflects a long-term evolution away from a focus

on manufacturing in the U.S. economy since PNC's index launched in 1984. At that time, goods comprised 70% of the Consumer Price Index, while today that number stands at just 35%.

Many of the gifts in the index representing goods remained un-

changed in price in 2024 – the Turtle Doves, Calling Birds, Gold Rings and Swans all stayed flat, though still expensive year over year. The French Hens and Geese were the avian exceptions, with the latter representing one of the most volatile gifts in this year's index, growing by more than 15%.

#### Housing Still High

The most volatile gift in the

2024 index is the first one – the Partridge in a Pear Tree - which rose in price by 17.1%. The least volatile gift, the Eight-Maids-a-Milking, has remained unchanged since 2009.

The Christmas Price Index



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also calculates the "True Cost of Christmas," which is the cost of purchasing all of the gifts as they repeat in the verses of the song. That cost increased by 3.6% to \$209,272 in 2024, crossing the \$200K threshold for the second year in a row.

If you prefer to shop online, you'll pay nearly \$5K more

See Index on page 10



Holly Days Christmas Market: Paula and Bob Clawson of Marshall - R & B Auction. Photo by Gary Strohm.

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# Holiday gift ideas for students



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Want to brighten the holiday season for the students in your life? Consider gifts that will ease the transition into the spring semester. Here are few to consider:

1. Support a musical journey: With 44 mini keys, the SA-81 from Casio is a great keyboard for both first-time players just embarking on their musical education and accomplished instrumentalists. A built-in metronome makes practice sessions a breeze, and features such as scale tuning, octave shift and transpose help introduce musical concepts. One-hundred

high-quality built-in tones covering a range of instruments, including piano, wind, percussion and acoustic instruments, along with 50 rhythm patterns in a variety of genres like pop, ballad, dance, and more, offer budding musicians a chance to experiment and express themselves creatively right away. All housed in a compact frame, it's a great choice for young students, students on-the-go, and dorm dwellers.

2. Lighten their load: If you remember lugging around heavy textbooks during your own student days, consider lightening the load of your gift

recipient with a high-quality e-reader. Look for a model with note-taking features, adjustable lighting to protect eyes and portability. A color screen is also a good idea, as it will make diagrams and charts easier to examine if your student will be reading textbooks on the device.

3. Bring the world of STEM within reach: With the advanced features of a next-generation graphing calculator, the fx-CG50 PRIZM can support students through middle school, high school and into college. With Natural Textbook Display and an intuitive icon menu, students will find the calculator incredibly easy to use. Its 3D graphing and improved catalog functions allow for greater engagement and real-life application in the mathematics classroom, and a host of compatible resources available at casioeducation.com can set them up for success. Because the model is approved for the SAT, PSAT, ACT and AP tests, your gift will be helping them prepare for a bright future.

4. Help them keep time:

tackle contact sports head-on, a durable, water-resistant sports watch can help them track their speed and progress throughout the season.

5. Expand their world: While many people today get their news by rapidly scanning headlines on apps, a deeper dive can improve literacy, expand knowledge and foster an

understanding of the world. Consider gifting your student a subscription to a high-quality newspaper or news magazine.

This holiday season, give students thoughtful gifts that will ease their life and make their schoolwork and extracurriculars more enjoyable.

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Breakfast with Santa: Marli Luci, Evelyn Dart and Amara Luci with Santa. Photo by Gary Strohm.

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# Survey reveals what's top of mind for holiday shoppers



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As the holiday season approaches, many consumers are planning to kick off their shopping earlier this year, aiming to lock in low prices, take advantage of promotions, and ensure all their

gifts arrive on time. A recent survey by Sensormatic Solutions reveals key insights that can guide both shoppers and retailers during this busy time.

According to the survey, 52% of respondents plan to

start their holiday shopping earlier than last year, and while shoppers are looking for deals, 48% plan to spend more than they did last year. "Understanding consumer trends is critical for both shoppers and retailers alike," said Christa Anz, global marketing leader, Sensormatic Solutions. "This survey highlights important considerations that can enhance the shopping experience and inform retail strategies."

Here are some of the survey's top findings:

- **Early Shopping Trends:** Over half (54%) of shoppers plan to begin their holiday shopping before November. This trend indicates a shift towards early planning to secure deals and avoid the rush of the season's busiest shopping days. Early shopping also helps lock in the best prices and ensure stock availability.

- **Preferred Pickup Options:** This year, 42% of shoppers plan to use Buy-Online-Pick-Up-in-Store (BOPIS), and 35% will opt for curbside pickup. However, 29% of respondents are concerned about possible long wait times, suggesting to retailers the importance of efficient customer service during peak hours and the need to provide several pick up options.

- **Spending Management:** While nearly half of shoppers plan to spend more this year, 52% of respondents noted they are creating a shopping list to avoid impulse purchases. In fact, 64% of younger shoppers have used recent deal days and flash sales to maximize their spending.

- **Prioritize Safety:** Safety is key to a productive holiday shopping season. In fact, 69% of consumers feel safer with visible security measures such as security personnel, surveillance cameras, and Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS) tags, and 34% of them consider these features essential for in-store shopping. This aligns with performance data that suggests such visual deterrents can effectively reduce theft and organized retail crime. Retailers should prioritize safety features, such as surveillance cameras and security personnel, to foster a positive shopping environment.

For more holiday shopping insights, visit [sensormatic.com](http://sensormatic.com).


This holiday season presents an opportunity for both consumers and retailers to adapt to evolving shopping behaviors. By understanding these insights, retailers can better meet customer expectations, while shoppers can enjoy a more informed and relaxed shopping experience.

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Breakfast with Santa: Kyler, Hazel, Tucker and Piper Bays. Photo by Gary Strohm.

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# Ship smarter, not harder: holiday shipping insights

In today's fast-paced, digital world, there are many gifting options for loved ones far and wide, from sending e-gift cards to their favorite shops and restaurants to creating custom video messages. However, a new survey from Duck brand, a leading maker of mailing and shipping products, finds that the festive fun of sending physical presents isn't lost.

"We learned that most people—98%—send at least one package containing gifts and nearly half—46%—typically mail up to three gifts throughout the season," says



Natalie Guillaume, director of product marketing, packaging tapes, at Shurtape Technologies, LLC, the company that markets Duck brand. "To make the process holly and jolly, we recommend planning ahead and purchasing high-quality supplies to ensure presents arrive on time and in one piece."

Good Tidings Delivered on Time

More than 60% of survey participants say they send their packages two to four weeks in advance of when they need to arrive. Still, 43% express their greatest concern when mailing goods throughout the yuletide season is the parcel arriving on time. Knowing they can't rely on the

logistical challenges.

Don't Let Tape Get Your Tinsel in a Tangle

When it comes to shipping, the wrong tape can turn anyone into a Grinch. Nearly half of people (45%) say tape not sticking well to boxes is their biggest challenge. In this case, a heavy-duty tape will do the trick. Look for one with a wide temperature range performance, so you don't have to worry about damaged deliveries due to a frosty forecast.

Additionally, 40% of people have experienced difficulty tearing packing tape. Duck Brand EZ Start Packing Tape, made with FrustrationFree technology, provides a simple solution for smooth, easy and quiet removal from the roll. The easy-to-use dispenser is uniquely designed to eliminate the annoyance of losing the tape end, which 39% of respondents say is a struggle.

With these tips, you can

magic of Santa's sleigh to make a timely delivery, Guillaume suggests getting ahead of the holiday hustle by checking delivery deadlines for the busy season. Then, leaving a little leeway to account for delays due to winter weather or other



Holly Days Christmas Market: Carson Boyer of Marshall - Charmed by Carson. Photo by Gary Strohm.



Breakfast with Santa: Cailey, Luna and Violet Garner with Santa. Photo by Gary Strohm.



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# Streamline your cooking this holiday season

Anyone who has ever hosted a big holiday meal knows there can be a lot of pressure to ensure everything comes out at the right time, and more importantly, tastes great.

Whether you're feeding your family or a crowd, here's how to streamline your cooking during the holidays and beyond by using the right equipment to its maximum capabilities:

Versatile appliances eliminate the need for a slew of single-use pieces of equipment like pizza ovens, air fryers and secondary ovens, which can clutter the kitchen and make your job more complicated. Being able to do the majority of your cooking with just a few



appliances will keep you organized during the busy holi-

day meal prep rush. With that in mind, consider outfitting

your kitchen with a double oven range or multi-function oven, which will allow you to cook independently in a single standard size appliance.

With two ovens, you can prepare multiple dishes that require different temperatures or modes simultaneously, so that you can roast the holiday turkey or ham in the larger oven, while steaming or baking your sides in the smaller oven and stovetop, without the hassle of over and undercooking, or crossing flavors between dishes. A double oven like the Italian-made Verona Appliances 36" Double Oven Prestige Range gives you the extra space you need to produce the quantity and quality of food you want. Available in stainless steel, matte black and white, it offers a stylized, upgraded look, along with high-powered, professional-level cooking performance.

The 10 easy-to-use cooking modes of a Lofra luxury Italian range empower you to just as easily achieve a flawless crust on a casserole as to perfect your favorite seasonal cookie recipe. Representing

the perfect union of form and function, you'll benefit from modern cooking features and gorgeous design.

To stay truly agile as a home chef, you'll also want to make sure that you're making full use of every accessory that is included in your appliances. The Verona Ultima range, for example, is a premier cooking appliance that comes with upgraded features and accessories, including an air fry tray, space saver shelf, a broiler pan and a griddle, for the ultimate all-in-one range. Its blend of beautiful design and innovative features

will likely inspire compliments from your holiday guests. Both Verona and Lofra are exclusively imported by EuroChef USA. For more information, visit eurochefusa.com.

Beyond equipment, your day will go more smoothly if you make a plan. Write out a timeline of the tasks you must complete, including the times when items need to go into



**Holly Days Christmas Market: Christian Michaels of Paris demonstrates his Blocksmith Shop stacking blocks.** Photo by Gary Strohm.

the oven and be removed. You can also recruit a family member or two to assist with dicing, peeling and other prep tasks. Finally, don't be afraid to take guests up on their inevitable offers to bring something. Whether it's dessert or cocktail ingredients, they'll be giving you one less thing to worry about and you'll be making them feel helpful – win-win!

With multifunctional equip-

ment and a smart game plan, you can streamline your kitchen and take your hosting to the next level this holiday season. Happy cooking!

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**Merry Christmas to all!**

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**Breakfast with Santa: Malcolm and Alivia Jackson with Mom Peyton and Santa.** Photo by Gary Strohm.



# How to keep kids' minds active during the holiday break



© Olga Yefimova / iStock via Getty

Even a short vacation from school can cause learning loss and leave kids feeling behind when they return to the classroom. Fortunately, there are many ways to keep minds active during the holiday break, some of which will reinforce the concepts they are learning in school. Here are a few of them:

**Vacation Reading:** Whether you're traveling for the holidays or sticking close to

home, curling up with a book is a great way to spend some of the inevitable down time. At the start of the break, hit up the library so everyone in the family will have plenty to read on subjects of interest to them. You might also consider giving at least one title to each gift recipient on your list this year to emphasize the idea that books can be treasured objects.

**Online Math Tools:** Casio's

suite of engaging education resources can help ensure students keep up their skills during the holidays. Those with the fx-9750GIII graphing calculator or (other easy-to-use models with hundreds of functions) will find plenty to challenge them when they check out Casio's expansive resource library of activities, Python programs and more, all of which are available for free online. From calculating slopes and finding derivatives to evaluating inferences and predications based on data, the resource includes exercises for every area of mathematical focus, including calculus, geometry and statistics.

**Historical Day Trip:** Take a day trip to a historic site to bring the past to life. Whether you visit a battlefield, the home of a notable figure, or a historically preserved city center, your trip will provoke discussion and keep minds engaged. If taking a scheduled tour is not possible due to limited holiday hours, do a bit

enjoyable and engaging.

**Exercise:** Staying active is not just good for physical health, it's also good for the mind and soul. With no P.E. class on the schedule however, kids may be missing out on their daily dose of exercise. Be sure to go on a walk or bike ride each day or get out in the

yard for some touch football or frisbee. If the weather is frightful, visit a yoga studio or even stay home and do an exercise class on YouTube.

This holiday season, balancing educational and healthy activities with fun and relaxation can help ensure your students return to school focused, engaged and ready to start a brand new semester.

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Breakfast with Santa: Anthony and Aaron Kemp with Santa.

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# DIY decorations that anyone can handle

You already know you can save money with homemade Christmas gifts and Christmas appetizers you make yourself, but your Christmas decorations don't have to break the bank either. Use these home-

made ideas for holiday decorating on the cheap.

**Create an Advent Calendar:** Start by spraying an old frame with a metallic base. Create tags using an online template for these DIY Christ-

mas decorations. Mix in gold, silver, and neutral ornaments to tie the whole calendar together.

**Go for a Bow Wreath:** Creating a simple, festive wreath. It is easy and won't

drain your wallet! Get this look by simply hot gluing bows of various colors to a Styrofoam wreath. It only takes about 20 minutes to complete.

**Craft a Candy Cane Vase:** Put some simple odds and

ends to good use for this easy craft. Glue the candy canes to a can, tie with a red ribbon and fill with artificial (or real) poinsettias.

Make Your Own Mistletoe: Felt, a fabric pencil, pearl embellishments, red ribbon and a hot glue gun are all you need for this cute DIY Christmas

# Festive holiday games for Christmas fun

If you're in charge of the Christmas party, make sure entertainment at the annual you've got a few of these

ideas on your party games list. Make sure it's chock-full of festive fun by adding some games to your party lineup. All of these are easy, inexpensive and sure to please your little elves.

The first game is Pass It On. This is a super simple, yet pretty genius game where not so perfect drawing comes in handy. It's like a broken telephone game, only this time is in drawing. Draw what you see then guess what you saw for hilarious and unpredictable outcomes. It's miscommunication at its best!

Who Got the Candy? This is a fun game for all ages. Let all the players sit in a circle. One player has a piece of candy in his hands and goes to each person and pretends to give them a candy, while only one person secretly gets the candy. The rest of the players have to try to guess who really got the candy.

Ornament on a Spoon is

a fun game that can test your balancing abilities. Divide into two teams, then set up a relay course. The first person to put an ornament on their spoon. However, you can not use your hands when passing off the ornament. The ornament has to be passed from one spoon to another.

A game for an adult Christmas party would be Two Truths and a Lie. Add a Christmas twist to this popular ice breaker by setting the theme of "Worst Christmas Gift Ever Received" and have each guest come up with two that are true and one that is a lie.

Bring some laughter to your party by playing Christmas Charades. When making your charades list, include movies, decorations and Christmas carols.

Blind Christmas Tree Ripping is a fun game that will make your guest use their motor skills. See how well your guests can rip a Christmas

tree out of construction paper without looking. Give them a prize for the most realistic tree.

For those guests who are more advanced and like trivia, play Christmas Movie Trivia. You can look up Christmas Movie trivia on your internet browser to get printable trivia sheets.

## Index

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for the convenience, and of course the packaging and shipping that gifts of birds require. PNC's online Christmas Price Index cost rose by 3.9% in 2024 to a total of \$54,073.69. Most of the gifts commanded an increase for internet shopping, but if you're looking for bargain buys based on last year's budget, the price of the Calling Birds, Gold Rings and Swans remained flat online in 2024.

For more information on the index, individual gifts and a 41-year tradition, visit pnc.com.

"Buying the same gifts year after year may seem boring," says Agati, "but keeping track of changes in your spending enables you to be more brilliant with your money, which is what I think the Christmas Price Index sets out to do."

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Breakfast with Santa: Elijah Kim with Santa. Photo by Gary Strohm.

**Merry Christmas!**

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decoration. Cut out your felt mistletoe using a template and arrange pearls how you like. Tie with ribbon and hang.

**Try Formal Finishing Touches:** Wrap bows around your dining room chairs (you can even tie on Christmas ornaments for extra sparkle). You can secure the underside by using tape as needed.

**Redo Your Wreath:** Stack wreaths and give classic winter door decor a pick-me-up. Purchase three wreaths in different sizes, hang on top of each other and add accessories. Now you have a cute snowman wreath that only cost you around \$20.

**Place Pretty Pinecones:**

To turn pinecones into pretty DIY Christmas decorations, dip them in gold paint (either partially or all of the way) or use a mixture of water, glue, and glitter for a sparkling effect. Place on side tables or use to fill baskets and bowls.

**Get a Galaxy Ornament:** These baubles are sure to catch your eye. Take a clear ornament, add clear floor wax inside, pour in glitter of your choice, shake and enjoy! These ornaments are a lot of fun to make with your kids.

**Check Out a Chalk Ornament:** These DIY Christmas decorations are great gifts that you can decorate differently each time. Paint your plastic

bulbs with chalkboard paint, let dry, then start drawing your holiday decorations on.

**Paint a Snowman Ornament:** Check these materials off of your list: Black, white and orange acrylic paint, a paintbrush, baby food jar and ribbon. Paint your jar and decorate it with a snowman face. Add ribbon to hang your ornament.

**Have a Hot Chocolate Jar:** Grab your favorite hot chocolate brand and toppings, a clear mug or mason jar, and start layering. Keep a few of these DIY Christmas decorations stashed in the guest room for visitors who stay with you during the holidays. All

they need to do is add hot water and enjoy!

**Turn Your Pillows into Presents:** Tie a bow around your throw pillows with holiday-colored ribbons, and they'll look just like Christmas gifts! Add a rhinestone pin for an extra decorating kick.

**Just Add Water:** Take clear vases or bottles, fill them with water, and add holiday-colored food coloring—a few drops will do. Then line the bottles up in a row, or decorate with floating candles for a festive touch.

**Spray a Spruce:** Spray paint artificial trees (big or small) with white paint for a clean, sophisticated decoration.

These decorations are truly easy and will leave your guest leaving in amazement.



Holly Days Christmas Market: Alex Arthur of Grandview - Arthur Apothecary. Photo by Gary Strohm.

## 'Tis the season of style and joy

The holidays are all about spreading cheer, and what better way to do that than with gifts that bring both comfort and style? This guide is your one-stop shop for finding the perfect shoes to keep your loved ones looking and feeling good all season long!

1. Stylish Boots: From sleek ankle booties to statement knee-highs, there's a perfect pair for every personality from brands like Timberland and Dr. Martens. Chunky soles and bold textures are in this season, so don't be afraid to make a statement!

2. Cozy Comfort: Looking for some cozy classics to keep feet warm this winter? Look no further than Ugg, Bearpaw and Birkenstock. These brands have something for everyone, from plush sheep-



skin boots to supportive cork footbeds. The holidays are the perfect time to kick back, relax and stay cozy with these timeless favorites.

3. Crocs and Jibbitz: Crocs are versatile all year round, and insulated options, especially the styles with a plush

create a one-of-a-kind pair that's perfect for the season.

4. Retro Style: Indulge in nostalgia and style with retro and Y2K looks from Adidas, Puma or New Balance. These iconic brands offer a modern twist on classic designs, making them the perfect choice for

a thoughtful and trendy holiday gift.

Unwrap the joy of the season of style with thoughtful gifts that offer comfort and functionality by visiting rackroomshoes.com. For one-stop-shopping, visit a Rack Room Shoes in your area, for

more fun and exclusive accessories and stocking stuffers only available in store.

The holiday season is about creating unforgettable memories, and the perfect gift can add a touch of magic to their celebrations.

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lining, are perfect for colder months. Thanks to the endless options of Jibbitz charms, it's easy to add a splash of personality. Choose from charms that are festive, or which feature favorite characters or hobbies to

# 10 ways to beat the holiday blues

Everyone sees it on television, magazine ads and movies — a table covered with delicious food, a perfectly decorated house, and family and friends laughing together in the glow of a warm fire. Unrealistic expectations can lead to the “holiday blues,” which often begins before Thanksgiving and lasts until after the first of the year, according to Ellen Lucas, associate director of Ball State’s Counseling Center.

She points out other factors contributing to holiday stress: the loss of a job or house, a friend or relative unable to come home or grief for

someone who recently died.

In addition, people frequently experience seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and feel more depressed due to the cold, gloomy days of winter, she said.

So what can you do? Lucas has 10 ideas:

Set realistic expectations and accept that no holiday gathering is perfect.

Make a holiday budget and stick to it.

Express your feelings. Write in a journal or talk to someone you trust.

Make a plan and realistically structure your time.

Reach out to other people.

Volunteer through your community or church.

Watch your alcohol consumption; alcohol is a depressant.

Exercise. Take a walk, do resistance training or do yoga. This will help release endorphins, the natural opiates in our brains.

Stick to your usual eating habits. Plan what you will eat before going to gatherings so you don’t overeat.

Don’t compare yourself to others. You don’t need to have the best light display in the neighborhood or the best party or give the most expensive presents.

Think about what is the most important part of the holidays for you and focus on what the holidays mean to you.

Lucas advises those who have feelings of depression lasting more than two weeks to seek professional attention. Symptoms include a disturbance in sleeping or eating, an inability to concentrate and feeling hopeless and worthless. Lucas can be reached at 765-285-1736.



Holly Days Christmas Market: Kim Neihart of Marshall - Brick Road Blooms. Photo by Gary Strohm.

## Wrapping

Continued from page 3

### Giant Button

A big button gives a kooky charm to a small box.

### Peacock Feather

A feather (cut to the length of the box) shimmers on similarly shaped leaves.

### Playing Card

A playing card makes a surprising gift tag and adds to the cheery plaid-meets-text chaos. Here’s the permission you need to “borrow” a card from the deck hanging in the junk drawer.

### Small Toy

A toy bear, car, or even a

funny figurine can double as an extra gift when held with bright cord.

### Velvet Flower


A velvet flower is the finishing touch to a really special gift—and hides the ends of the ribbon.

### Mix Gold and Silver

Combining metals feels modern and fun, amping up both sparkle and excitement. Simple paper can be gilded with scads of crisscrossed gold ribbon.

### Pretty Postcard

A pretty or plain postcard can add extra decor to your solid color paper or jazz up your intricate designed paper.



**Let the Marshall Advocate elves help with your Christmas list!**

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- Mom & Dad**
- Uncle Bill**
- Aunt Martha**
- Junior**

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