

Holidays 2004: What's Hot, What's Not



COLD AS ICE



GIFTS UNDER \$20

As the holidays continue to approach, malls and stores are swarmed with shoppers flocking everywhere to find the perfect present to brighten that special someone's holiday. The best gifts people buy for close ones, such as friends, co-workers, siblings, and parents, during the holidays, do not exceed the price of \$20.

don't put off purchasing a gift for a close one this holiday season. By planning ahead and shopping early, there will be no worries about those holiday crowds, and you will not be left out in the cold.

GIFTS OVER \$100

Holiday gifts can sometimes be difficult to find, deciding how much to spend and what the recipient might want, there are many gifts between \$99 and \$299 that would make the perfect gift for someone this holiday season.

This year some of those gifts that top the list of most wanted gifts would be the gifts that are sold at electronic stores. Those popular gifts are video games systems, such as Gameboy Advanced, X-Box and games for those systems, Portable DVD players, digital cameras and MP3 players. The only bad thing about all of these gifts is deciding which ones to buy.

The most requested gift that has been on the list of kids and even adults for the past several years have been games.

"Really only the games have been the top gift this year. Out of all the games, the X-Box game system has been the top selling gift. Also portable DVD players and the games for the game systems have also been popular this year," said Chris Todd Sales, Associate of the Antioch Wal-Mart.

The X-Box game system, which debuted just a few years back, retails for \$149.99 and offers a variety of games from first person shooter games to sports and adventure games as well as a feature to play opponents over the internet using a high-speed internet connection.

Gaming isn't the only top gift to give someone this holiday season, MP3 players also seem to be wanted by a majority of gift recipients this year. An MP3 player is a small device that can store massive amounts of songs that are downloaded from your computer.

"I want an MP3 player because I like to listen to music," said Ryan Hoyle, ACHS Senior.

The most wanted MP3 player this year is the Apple iPod. iPod, which starts at \$299, offers the user the ability to store 10,000 songs on a small device that weighs 5.6 ounces.

"The iPod is the hippest and coolest MP3 player out there," said Thomas Henning Sales Associate of

Best Buy in Gurnee.

There are more MP3 players available than just the Apple iPod. There are some MP3 players that start at \$99 and can store about 100 songs.

Along with playing games and listening to music, capturing a moment couldn't be easier today than with the use of a digital camera.

Digital camera prices were once over \$500. Now you can find a great digital camera at an affordable price. A digital camera works just like a regular film camera with the exception of how the photos are stored. Unlike using film for your film camera, a digital camera offers you the ability to store your photos on a memory card and either print them directly from your computer or bring them to a photo-printing store. Using a digital camera also enables you to edit pictures on your computer.

"The digital camera section is the busiest around this time of year. It also gives you the biggest bang for your buck," said Henning.

There is no clear winner in the digital cameras. Each brand offers great cameras for around \$250 and they all offer about the same options. One might offer different features over the others; it just depends on your personal preference. If you are unsure on what to buy, most electronic stores can recommend one that would best fit the gift recipient needs.

So whether the gift recipient likes to play games, listen to music, or take pictures, there are many gifts out there between \$99 and \$299 that he or she might enjoy. It just depends on what that person wants and how much you are willing to spend on each gift.

UNWANTED GIFTS

The day after Christmas is one of the biggest shopping days of the year. Well, maybe not exactly shopping, but exchanging. The malls and stores are packed with customers returning those gifts that were the wrong size, wrong color, they already have, and others that made them wonder, "What in the world were they thinking when they bought me this?"

Returning gifts after Christmas is

always a hassle for everyone, and it always seems to be the same types of gifts that are returned. There are many presents that people would prefer to not see under the tree, and by staying away from them, someone will be saved a much dreaded trip to the mall.

Students at Antioch Community High School agree that they would prefer not to wake up Christmas morning and find underwear under their tree.

"When your parents buy you underwear for Christmas, it is embarrassing and awkward because underwear is not something you want from them," said Jessica Willemarck, ACHS Sophomore.

Most students also said they do not enjoy receiving those classic handmade knit sweaters that grandma thought they would look absolutely adorable in.

"A knit sweater keeps you warm, but it makes you look like a lit up Christmas tree, and you feel dumb walking around. And you know your mom will make you wear it some time because grandma made it," said Bobby Ryan, ACHS Junior.

Items such as socks, school supplies, and toiletries are never really appreciated as a Christmas gift. These items have no special meaning to them, and though some people may need them, they do not necessarily make good holiday gifts also.

Tessa Curtis, an ACHS Sophomore, says that the worst gift that she has ever gotten for Christmas was a ceiling fan.

"I opened it and I thought it was a joke and was something else in a



GIFTS UNDER \$20

HOT FOR THE HOLIDAYS



Stories by: Jessica Gaido, David Becker, Martin Pazanin
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HOLIDAY STORIES

ceiling fan box, but then I opened the box, and it was actually a ceiling fan. It was so bad," said Curtis.

Some other gifts that ACHS students agree they do not want include books, crafts, and art supplies.

Jennifer, who would prefer to keep her last name anonymous, Target manager of Gurnee, says that clothing and movies are the most returned gifts after Christmas.

"They might have already had the movie, or received 10 of the same one," said Jennifer.

CD's and movies make good gifts if you know the receiver does not already own it. Otherwise, it is a hassle to have to wait an hour in line to return them at the crowded stores.

Clothing is another gift to try and avoid, unless you know the right style or size. ACHS students say that most of the clothes they receive for Christmas are not their genre or style. A good way to improvise while purchasing clothing is to purchase a gift card to their favorite store.

By avoiding the gifts that people do not enjoy receiving for Christmas, one will make the recipient happier and save them the hours they would have to wait in that crowded line to make returns.

With Christmas coming right around the corner, there are many rituals that Antioch Community High School students will be taking part in. One of these rituals is the exchanging of gifts. Whether parents, friends, or other family members are involved, it is almost certain that the ACHS students will be both giving and receiving gifts.

Under certain circumstances, the exchanging of gifts can go array. Due to not being completely sure of what the recipient of the gift wants, the shopper may get the worst possible gift. This, often times, can turn into funny stories that will always be remembered with Christmas. These are three of those stories:

Jordan Taylor, ACHS senior, said

that he had anticipated last year's gifts on Christmas day for a long time, but that the results did not meet the expectations.

"All I got was beef jerky, Skittles, a key chain, and a pair of pajama pants said Taylor. I wanted a computer that year and my mom said no.

So, I said I didn't want anything and that is exactly what I got."

Taylor wasn't shy to hide away from his emotions either, even in the presence of his family.

"At first I laughed," said Taylor. "At first I thought it was a joke. Then I realized it wasn't and I quickly got somewhat depressed."

Another story comes from former ACHS student, Jennifer Dewar, who graduated last year. Dewar said that



GIFTS OVER \$100

she used to get strange gifts from her aunt.

"When I was little, I received a box of Kleenex, among other things," said Dewar. "Whatever I received each year, it was something lame."

Dewar did not take it as seriously as Taylor did.

"I laughed because I thought it might have been a joke," said Dewar. "Looking back, I maybe should have been quite upset. It was kind of weird. I wasn't sure if it was meant to be a joke so I just tried to be nice about it."

Dewar's expectations, like Taylor's, were not met.

"I was expecting something a little bit nicer," said Dewar.

The third story involves Chandler

Kent, AGHS junior.

Kent didn't mind receiving the gift that he did.

"I was recently given a barbie doll," said Kent.

Kent was even less serious than Dewar.

"I thought it was pretty funny," said Kent. "It was awesome. Personally, I was a little surprised, but I was laughing pretty hard."

Not only has Kent received funny gifts, but he has also wrapped them up and given them away.

"I gave away an old pinball machine. It doesn't even work anymore," said Kent. "The recipient of the gift was not expecting a pinball machine from the 70's. He didn't take it home. He didn't like it much."

It is clear that there are many different circumstances in which the right gift is not chosen. No matter how embarrassing it may seem, those, "Bad and Unwanted" gifts will remain in the Christmas memories of ACHS students forever.