

the hip gift giver

Mark Twain
once

said, "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." When choosing a gift, there are some essentials for making Twain's quote a reality for friends and relatives.

Braving long lines, scouring dozens of stores and spending way too much time in the greeting card aisle are all things of the past. Being a great gift-giver does not mandate stress and a maxed-out credit card. All it takes is a little thought, preparation, and inspiration! Whether it's a gift meant for a birthday, holiday, wedding, or 'just because', these simple suggestions will help dress up any gifting style and help the ones you love Explore, Dream, and Discover like never before.



Start early, and don't wait Slow down! Enjoy!

Buying a gift should be fun – not a last minute hassle. Keep your list in the back of your mind and make sure to give yourself plenty of time to plan and shop. This allows you to be your most creative.

Stop. Think. Shop.

The best gifts are those that hit closest to home – so stop and think:

- *What is the recipient passionate about?*
Animals or Sports?
- *What makes them smile?*
Adventure or Relaxation?
- *What makes this person tick?*
Art or the Outdoors?

Now use your answers as a map, guiding you towards the gift that fits their blueprint!

Just like the car you drive, the books you read or the outfit you wear – your gift says something about you

Remember that your gift should reflect your personality as much as theirs. So whether you put your artistic style into the wrapping or incorporate some of your own wild style into the gift itself, just get creative and put your own flair into it!

Give a gift that keeps on giving

Gifts the recipient can use again and again or that create lasting memories will ensure they'll be thinking about you always! Consider gifts that will touch their lives and hearts for years to come. Gifts such as a pottery class, a ride in a race car, a family portrait, or private time with a personal trainer all strike a chord by enriching the recipient's life with something unforgettable.

Spread the joy

Part of the joy of giving a gift is the connection it establishes or strengthens between two people. Why not enhance those connections by giving a gift they can share with their family and friends...including you!? Wine, circus excursions, cruises along the Potomac or weekend getaways are all gifts that provide the opportunity to create new memories and spend time with old friends.

Presentation is everything

With the right touches, simple can be elegant. Whether your gift fits neatly into a small bag or in a box all wrapped up, the key is in the details: a matching bow, brightly colored tissue paper, or a hand-made card will all be sure to garner 'ooo's' and 'ahhh's'.



Don't try to be perfect

Because no one is! Your preparation and thoughtfulness will come shining through. At the end of the day, your recipient will be thankful to be remembered, regardless of your gift. Your creativity and personal touch are icing on the cake.

Treat yourself

When you've completed shopping, give YOURSELF something to look forward to. Reward yourself for accomplishing your gift-giving goals.

Whether it's big or small, the newest trend or an antique keepsake, the goal remains the same: to create a lasting connection among friends, colleagues and loved ones that will extend beyond the life of any object you can buy – after all, it's truly the thought that counts.



Create a signature gift

Signature gifts are one of the easiest and most classic ways to create a lasting gift giving impression. Choose a theme and send the same gift...year after year...with a slight twist each time. Whether it is an around the world gourmet basket, a blue Tiffany's box, or a new experience, your gift recipients will always look forward to something they can count on and know will be exciting and wanted.

Relive the memories

You've laughed, you've cried – celebrate that special bond by incorporating your time together into your gift. Reference an inside joke, recall an embarrassing moment, or insert a photograph of times past into your gift message. They'll love your gift even before they see what's inside.

Kim AuBuchon is the chief operating officer at Excitations.com About Excitations Founded in 2004, Excitations (www.excitations.com) is the premiere experiential gift company on the East Coast and will soon launch Nation wide. Whether it's a stint behind the wheel of a race car, a behind the scenes experience with your favorite sports team or an introduction to fly fishing, gift buyers will have far more exhilarating possibilities than the usual standby gifts to choose from allowing them to give memorable, unique experiences as presents to their friends, family and business associates. The company is headquartered in Northern, Va. For more information, please go to www.excitations.com. ■