

Advice On How To Buy The Perfect Piece Of Jewelry

It's that time of year when thoughts turn to gift giving.

There isn't a woman out there who isn't thrilled with the thought of Santa's helper stuffing her stocking with glittering jewelry. But how do you know what to buy?

Look at the jewelry she's already wearing and follow these pointers to help choose the perfect jewelry present this holiday season.

- What kinds of metal does she prefer? Is she wearing silver, yellow or white gold or platinum? Does she mix white and yellow metals? Try a piece in two-tone metals.

- What gemstones does she like? You can never go wrong with diamonds, but some women prefer colored gemstones.

If you know your recipient's favorite color, you can always buy a piece of jewelry that showcases a stone in that color.

- What's her personal style? If her style is contemporary and modern, then chances are she will prefer sleek designs with clean lines and geometric shapes.

If she has a more romantic

style, she may prefer something with filigree or an antique look.

Maybe she's a trendsetter and she likes the unexpected.

Perhaps a pearl or diamond dangling from a leather cord is just her style.

Note the size of her jewelry. Is it a big statement piece or is it small and dainty? This too, should help narrow your choices.

- What are her interests? Does she love anything with animals, hearts, flowers or the sea? A beautiful charm bracelet in silver or gold would be an ideal choice.

- Go window shopping with your unsuspecting recipient. Pay attention to the items she admires. Go back and purchase them.

- If there is a jewelry store that she frequents, ask a sales associate who knows her taste for some suggestions or if he or she knows of an item that she's admired recently.

Whether you're after earrings, a necklace, bracelet, watch or brooch, be sure to visit a jewelry merchant that has a good reputation and has been in business for a while.

If you need to make a return or

exchange a piece, or have the item repaired, you can be sure the store will be around.

There are several classic pieces

Creative Places To Hide Gifts From The Kids

Come the holidays, your kids will become detectives — gift detectives that is.

They'll search the house high and low for their holiday gifts, leaving no cabinet unopened and no closet untouched by their sticky fingers.

Here are a few hiding-spot ideas that hopefully will stop your resident snoopers in their tracks.

Just be sure not to get so clever and sneaky that you forget where you've hidden the gifts! Jot down the locations in your organizer or

that are ideal for every jewelry wardrobe, including diamond solitaire earrings, a diamond solitaire necklace or a diamond bracelet.

clue in your spouse as a backup.

- * Place gifts in paper bags — like those from the supermarket — and hide them in the back of your closet or under your bed.

- * Hide gifts in the attic or basement. Cover them with blankets so they are out of sight.

- * Stash gifts in suitcases. Kids are so accustomed to seeing the luggage, they won't think to look there.

- * Place gifts on a high shelf in the back of your storage closet, out of eyesight.

For those who love color, suggestions include gemstone bead necklaces or bracelets that come in a rainbow of luscious shades.

- * Store gift under the kitchen sink or on the top shelf in the laundry room.

- * Place small gifts inside old purses, bags or briefcases. Hang them in a closet or spare bedroom that isn't used very often.

- * Stash presents in the china cabinets. Kids aren't allowed in there anyway so they'll never find their gifts.

- * If all else fails, store your gifts at work or stash them at a neighbor's home. Just be sure you get them home in time!

Holiday Gift Giving Trends

Despite thinning wallets, your holiday gift list doesn't need to be a source of panic. Experts insist you can give meaningful gifts, even on a limited budget.

In these tough economic times, shoppers can protect their gift investments by focusing on gifts with special significance for both the giver and recipient.

Gifts with special meaning will be used and remembered long after the holiday ends, and there are countless budget-minded gifts that make a lasting statement.

This season gifts are trending toward affordable presents that convey personal messages:

Gifts Celebrating Family

Holidays traditionally are about spending time with family. With more Americans spending time at home, family has become even more important.

This season, retailers are offering gifts that celebrate and showcase loved ones — from contemporary jewelry that incorporates children's birthstones to photo albums that highlight family lineage and even photo bookmarks building in pictures of the kids.

Personal Gifts

In tough economic times, shoppers want to ensure each gift they give is used and remembered for years to come.

With this in mind, personalized gifts are expected to be among the season's best sellers.

Gifts That Give Back

Money may be tight, but consumers still want to support charitable organizations.

For those who can't fit a mone-

tary donation into holiday budgets, gifts donating a portion of their proceeds provide another means of support.

Many companies offer gifts that benefit important causes.

Things Remembered, for example, is partnering with the Make-A-Wish Foundation for a 12th straight year to help shoppers find great gifts while simultaneously granting wishes of deserving children.

Non-Toy Gifts

Most kids have enough toys. This year, select gifts children will hold dear for a lifetime.

Gifts like engraved water globes or personalized, embroidered blankets can be enjoyed this season and passed to future generations.

Children often don't remember who got them which toy, but they'll remember these sentimental gifts for a lifetime.

Gifts For The Home

Whether given as hostess gifts

or shared over holiday dinners with extended family, home-oriented holiday gifts will again ring popular.

"Home-focused gifts will be more popular than ever before because shoppers recognize they will be used and appreciated this season and for many years to come.

Plus, many home-oriented gifts add value with customizable options or decorative packaging that eliminates the need for budget-draining wrapping paper or gift bags.

To outfit the house in seasonal style and put a personalized touch on entertaining, retailers have introduced a variety of home gifts that offer room to engrave names, dates, holiday memories and other special reflections.

Such home adornments even include smaller keepsakes, such as engravable photo stocking holders, embroidered stockings or adorable snowman-themed water globes.

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