

# Gifts 101: A Guide for Giving Extraordinary Gifts

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**Life is short. If you're like me, you want the people in your life to know how much they mean to you. You want to find ways to express your appreciation and to create lasting connection. Gift-giving occasions don't have to feel like a burden. Rather, they can be a chance to create a little magic.**

**Giving the perfect gift is actually easier than you think. Here's the key: taking time to put your focus on the other person and making the process enjoyable for yourself. If these two elements are in place, I promise you, you can't go wrong.**

**Below are some quick tips for great gift giving. 101 Gift ideas begin on page 4**

## **Put yourself in the other person's shoes.**

Before rushing out to the mall or logging on to an online store, set aside some quiet time to think about the person for whom you want to buy or make a gift. Most of us make the mistake of buying something that we'd like or want. What makes a great gift giver is taking the time to think about the other person. What hobbies does he enjoy? What new interest has she talked about lately? Has she dropped any clues recently? You might pick up a photo and reflect on being in that person's home. Is there a material gift that they need? Some service or assistance? Or would they most appreciate a heartfelt handmade gift?

## **Think experiential rather than material.**

All too often when we think of gifts, we think of some item we run out to the mall to buy. And this is great when someone you love really needs a particular thing or you know they'd delight in something specific. But consider giving a gift someone can experience. For example, if you have someone in your life who is crazy about music, you could purchase tickets for an upcoming symphony or rock performance. Or you could give him some lessons at a local music school. Your best friend the theater buff might love tickets to the latest production at the downtown theater.

## **Give a gift you can enjoy together.**

One of the things people appreciate most in life is getting to spend quality time with the people we love. Why not give a gift of that time and connection? Your music lover friend might like a certificate to visit a music store together to listen to new tunes and then you could buy him a CD. Or think about your friend who loves to hike, but doesn't have the time to discover new routes. You could plan a day together and surprise her with a beautiful day of hiking in a new place, followed by lunch at a unique cafe along the way — or prepared by you at home.

## **Make something personal and one-of-a-kind.**

No matter how many material things someone has, he or she still wants and needs to feel loved, seen, and acknowledged. With some creativity it's possible to wow your loved ones in a way that even the largest diamond ring or shiniest new car can't do. Giving someone a personalized gift can be the very best gift in the world ... and it doesn't have to cost a penny. What you're really giving is the gift of love. If you're an artist, paint or sketch her dog, child, or favorite place. If you knit, make him a sweater. Write them a story or create a captioned photo book. Or try my all-time favorite personalized gift: the "Love List". Simply sit down and focus on all the things you love about someone. Your list can be funny or sweet or silly. I guarantee you ... there is no better gift than this!

## Listen up.

Can you remember something they've said in passing that might be a great gift clue? Did she recently say she wished you two could afford a trip to Paris? Obviously, buying plane tickets and planning a trip would be fabulous. But if you can't afford that, you can still give a little taste of Paris by planning dinner at the best French restaurant in town, or buying a bottle of French wine and the DVD *J'taime Paris* or some French perfume. Even if you have a very small budget, you could check some language books out of the library and invite her over to learn French together and eat croissants.



## Give your time and talents.

One of the things people most miss about gift giving is the most obvious gifts of all — something we do all the time. If you're a computer whiz, how about giving a coupon or two for emergency house calls to help troubleshoot. A seamstress could make some alterations coupons. A handyman could offer three hours of fix-it services.

## Help 'em out.

Even if you don't have a special service to offer, there are plenty of ways to give a gift of your time. You could offer to babysit the kids, shovel the drive, do the laundry, or take over dog walking duties for a day. If you create handmade "gift certificates" for these things, people are more likely to take you up on your offer. That makes it feel more like a gift than a favor.

## Pool together for a great group gift.

Group gifts are fabulous ... and this is why: it enables the gift givers to give something more substantial. Also, right now so many people are living on reduced budgets and might not be able to replace that broken DVD player or buy a new set of dishware. Instead of getting a bunch of small, insignificant items, people can team up to give something really meaningful. About half of the clients at Mad Moon Creations are siblings or bridesmaids or groups of friends who pool their money to buy the gift.

## Give 'em something they might not buy for themselves.

Lots of people are reluctant to spend money on themselves for things that feel are extravagant or unnecessary, such as a visit to the local spa or nail salon, imported foods, or fancy accessories.

## Think unique.

Has anyone ever planned something truly unique for you like a whale watching excursion, scavenger hunt, or hot air balloon ride. Use Google to find unusual adventures where you live by typing in "unique things to do in Your City." You can also ask friends about their most memorable adventures.



## Go eco.

So many people have so much stuff that is piling up in their homes. People are often overwhelmed with clutter. The most eco-friendly gift you can give is to offer to spend time doing something you love with someone or helping them out in some way—plan an adventure, write her a song, bring all the fixings for dinner over and cook, etc. You could also purchase tickets to a fundraiser for her favorite nonprofit or donate to that group in her name.

## Gifts for people you don't know well.

The key to giving a great grab bag, office gift, or Secret Santa gift is thinking of things that almost any personality type might enjoy. That means staying away from any gift that is way too specific like a Pittsburgh Steelers mug or a pink heart necklace. And while chocolate or festive foods might be tempting, many folks are on special diets or trying to lose weight. This is the perfect time for those bookstore or music gift cards that almost anyone can enjoy.

## Other Things to Consider

Now that you've got the perfect gift, there are just three more things to think about:

### Wrap it up.

Presentation is so important. Don't wrap your well-thought-out gift in wrinkled brown paper or torn tissue paper you're reusing. While it may not seem like the wrapping matters, it does: it sets the tone for the gift and creates anticipation and delight.



### Timing is everything.

Consider the timing of the gift. Even the best gift in the world won't be well received if she's given it while she's in the middle of cooking the turkey dinner or you're in a loud, crowded place. Make sure the recipient is able to fully focus on your gift. You've taken the time to create or buy something special; make sure your presentation reflects that.

### Last, but not least.

Last, but not least, take the time to congratulate yourself on a job well done and treat yourself to something that might feel rewarding or nurturing— a material gift or some time to relax. The best gift givers are the people who also know how to give to themselves. And chances are, you know exactly what the perfect gift for you would be!

**Keep reading to discover  
101 simple  
(yet extraordinary!)  
gifts you can give!**

# 101 One-of-a-kind Gifts of Love

## Experiential gifts.

- \* For the music lover: Tickets to the symphony or rock concert
- \* For the dance lover: Tickets to the ballet or modern dance performance
- \* Artsy ones: Museum membership or two admission tickets and lunch in the cafe
- \* For the theater lover: Theater or circus tickets
- \* Self-help gal: Evening or weekend workshop with favorite speaker
- \* For a cooking aficionado: Cooking lessons
- \* For the sports buff: Tickets to local sports team
- \* Writers: Writing workshop or an evening in a cabin to write
- \* Comedy lover: Improv lessons or comedy club
- \* Movie buff: Film passes at the local cinema or AMC gift card
- \* Book lovers: Tickets to an author reading
- \* Outdoorsy types: River-rafting trip or rock climbing lessons
- \* Daring ones: Sky diving or bungee jumping lessons
- \* Children: Trip to the old-fashioned soda fountain and to the park
- \* Adventure lover: Create a scavenger hunt
- \* Animal lover: Whale watching excursion or membership to the local humane society



## Gifts you can enjoy together.

- \* Your music lover friend might like a certificate to visit a music store together to listen to new tunes and then you could buy him a CD
- \* You could take him to a free concert and then treat him to a glass of wine or hot chocolate
- \* You could invite him to your home to relax on the couch with a home-cooked meal and an hour of new music you picked out
- \* Maybe the person who has everything loves to hike, but doesn't have the time to discover new routes. You could plan a day together and surprise her with a beautiful day of hiking in a new place, followed by lunch at a special place Your book-loving friend might enjoy a trip to the library and an hour devoted to helping her find a few books followed by a cup of hot chocolate in a cozy café where you two share excerpts from your books
- \* Find a recipe, buy the ingredients and teach her how to make apple strudel
- \* A day of painting, writing, or pottery making in your home
- \* Give our book, "Simply Celebrate" and choose one of the celebrations to do together –like hiding money for people to find or creating a dream shrine
- \* Two tickets to the theater or movies along with a certificate for popcorn and soda

## Personal and one-of-a-kind gifts.

- \* Cartoon doodles or fun sketch
- \* Embroider aprons or dish towels
- \* Bake a cake
- \* Create a family recipe book
- \* 100 things I love about you
- \* What I've learned from you
- \* Favorite memories/photo book
- \* Bloopers photo book
- \* Write a story
- \* Create a DVD.
- \* Interview a sibling or child
- \* Write her a song,
- \* Make a piece of jewelry
- \* Create a piece of pottery
- \* Knit a sweater
- \* Carve a small wooden totem pole



## Following-up-on-clues gifts.

- \* Did she recently say she wished you two could afford a trip to Paris? How about a dinner at the best French restaurant in town, a bottle of French wine, a DVD of J'taime Paris, and/or some French perfume? (For added points, you could learn a few lines of French to sprinkle in.)
- \* Has he been swamped at work and misses time to play his guitar? You could book a getaway at a cottage someplace and take care of the cooking so all he has to do is play guitar all weekend long.
- \* She's so excited about her upcoming trip to Spain, but money is tight: how about Spanish lessons or dinner certificate at a highly-recommended restaurant in Madrid?
- \* She's been wishing she could afford the new hair salon in town, so you make an appointment and drive her there without telling her where you're headed.

## Gifts of your time and talents.

- \* Handyman: three hours worth of household handyman help
- \* Computer whiz: two emergency house calls to help troubleshoot
- \* Seamstress: alterations
- \* Golf expert: Beginners lessons
- \* Accountant: tax consultation
- \* Cook: Cook a meal for them in their home
- \* Car mechanic: Tune up the car or change the oil
- \* Editor: Help with resume
- \* Yoga teacher: At-home individual lesson
- \* Massage therapist: Back-care massage
- \* A book of redeemable coupons that are good for dish washing, house cleaning, baby sitting, back-rubs, a home-cooked meal, etc.

## Gifts that lend a helping hand.

- \* Coupon to babysit the kids
- \* Shovel the drive
- \* Take over the carpool for a week
- \* Drop off dinner one night during the week
- \* Wash or fix their car
- \* Do the laundry
- \* Make a book of redeemable coupons that are good for one each month to dish wash, house clean, babysit, backrub, cook, etc.



## Group gifts.

- \* Spa day
- \* Jewelry
- \* Appliance they need but can't afford
- \* Overnight getaway at a B&B
- \* Collection of thoughts/wishes (Do yourself or hire Mad Moon Creations: [madmoon.com](http://madmoon.com))

## Things they might not buy for themselves.

- \* A facial at the local spa
- \* High-quality cookingware
- \* Italian boots
- \* Vintage hat box
- \* Perfume
- \* Lingerie
- \* Theater tickets
- \* Designer handbag

## Think unique.

- \* In Oakland, Ca one can take a gondola ride on Lake Merritt
- \* San Antonio, TX offers zipline tours
- \* Many beach towns offer parasailing
- \* In Santa Monica one could ride the bumper cars on the pier
- \* In Astabula County, Ohio there are 16 covered bridges that provide a fun day's adventure
- \* Many cities offer places where folks can drive a Nascar Stock Car
- \* A hot air balloon ride
- \* Indoor flying
- \* Elevator to the top of a hotel and then indoor picnic
- \* Google "Unique things to do in "City Name" to find something unique near you

## Let 'em choose.

- \* Chinese menu of delights: For your sister you might offer three possible restaurant choices for lunch and three possible activities like taking her for a pedicure or going to ice-skate or going to comedy.
- \* For your dad you might offer golfing lessons, tickets to the ballgame, or a hike and lunch excursion.

## Go eco.

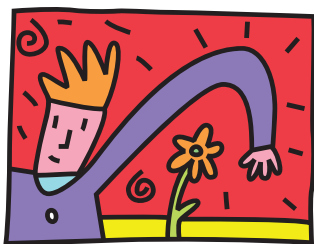
- \* Tickets to a fundraiser for the humane society or environmental group
- \* Donate to her favorite charity
- \* Buy seeds or plants for their garden or yard
- \* Volunteer together at her favorite nonprofit then buy her something from the gift store

## Gifts for people you don't know well.

- \* A movie gift card for a local theater or something generic like AMC
- \* itunes or local music store
- \* Bookstore near the office
- \* Local bakery
- \* Coffee/tea shop.
- \* Ebay or Amazon

## Last-minute gifts.

- \* Online (order something online, print out a photo of it, put the pic in a card, your gift is on its way.)
- \* Handmade gift certificate to a movie, the theater, dinner, a back rub, shopping for perfume, a trip to the bookstore, a trip to Egypt, you name it.
- \* Order a magazine subscription
- \* Stop by the local grocery store and pick up a gift card from the dozens most sell and put it in a greeting card with a personal note like, "I know how much you love books, thought you could pick out some great fiction for yourself with this gift card."



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extraordinary, one-of-a-kind gifts?**

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arts and gifts that are sure to make magic  
for someone you love.**

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