

Ask an Expert – Meaningful Christmas Gifts for 2020

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Thanksgiving is behind us, and hopefully it was celebrated without you or members of your household contracting COVID-19. We now have a few weeks to prepare for the next series of 2020 challenges – what will Christmas look like this year?

This is the perfect year to be both thoughtful and practical in helping others be better prepared for the months ahead as we work to stay healthy and happy. This year, gift recipients will likely include family and friends who now work reduced hours or have lost jobs, are home-schooling or learning to reach out through online platforms and social media.

Many websites tout the best gifts for 2020, such as www.popsugar.com, www.techgadgetstrends.com and dozens more. Consider scanning them to get ideas for girls, boys, tweens, tech-savvy people, people working from home, etc.

Here are examples of gift ideas for a year that has been anything but typical:

- A 1-month subscription to an at-home meal service – Those who are now working from home and not shopping for food as often may benefit from having someone else assemble all the supplies. The convenience of weeks of not worrying about planning meals and grocery shopping would be a welcome

gift for most people. Consider *Hello Fresh*, *Home Chef*, *Blue Apron* and others.

- Gas card – Many people would appreciate a few gallons of fuel for running holiday errands or traveling home to be with loved ones.
- A case of toilet paper – It may seem like a laughable gift, but then again, who knows when the next run on this popular luxury item might be in short supply?
- A pantry stocked with the basics – Stock someone's pantry with flour, whole-grain pasta, soups, canned tomatoes, mushrooms, etc. Check out extension.usu.edu/createbetterhealth/ for recipe and menu ideas.
- Pre-paid credit card – Unlike a specific store/business gift card, a pre-paid credit card (\$25-\$500) is an excellent option if you're not sure what to get. Be aware that there is an up-front service fee when purchasing the card – usually around \$5.
- Home office upgrades – Ideas include noise-cancelling headphones, a standing desk, a treadmill desk or upgrading computer software so that virtual backgrounds can be used. Or what about an ice machine or small refrigerator for their home office? Find something to help make the recipient's workspace as comfortable and current as possible.
- Designer or designable cloth face masks – Children or teens attending face-to-face classes or a college student returning to campus may enjoy a small wardrobe upgrade. Add some life and color for them with new face masks.
- Neck/back massager – For those who sit at a desk all day, tension will likely begin to manifest itself as tightness in the upper-back muscles, neck and lower back. Think of how good a 10-15-minute massage would feel!
- Ukulele or keyboard – Take a break to learn a musical instrument to help keep the mind alert and alleviate stress by creating music. A new trending instrument that users say promotes a sense of peace and well-being is the handpan drum, steel tongue or ethereal drum. Check it out on YouTube.
- Hopefully, the above list of ideas will help you consider thoughtful, creative gifts that will be especially meaningful this year.

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