



## How to...



# Give thoughtful holiday gifts

Use these ideas to choose meaningful presents for your family and friends.

It's always special to surprise someone you care about with a gift they'll love for Hanukkah, Christmas, or Kwanzaa. But how do you decide on a present you'd be proud to give each person on your list? Try these tips.

### Listen and learn

Thinking of something your family member or friend will like (and use) is key. For instance, if during a conversation they mention they want or need something, try to remember. You should also listen for compliments they give you. If you know the person loves something you have—whether it's a game or silly socks—consider getting them something similar.

### Give an upgrade

Another good idea is to give the person a new version of something they already have and use. This can be really nice for the person receiving the gift because they may not buy it for themselves. For example, maybe your friend who loves to draw could use a new set of colored pencils. Or maybe you know that your brother doesn't love the bike helmet he has. A new one in his favorite color might be a great gift.

### Get creative

Handmade gifts can be extra meaningful. Consider making one of the crafts featured on these pages. Any of

them could be a nice surprise for a parent, grandparent, or teacher. Gifts can also be experiences or ideas for spending time together. For example, you could give your family a gift certificate for a special Sunday breakfast made by you. If you and your sister love to skateboard, create a map of a route at a local park that the two of you can ride together.

### Wrap it up

Now that you've found the perfect gift, focus on wrapping it nicely. Store-bought wrapping paper or a gift bag can work, or you can make your own wrapping paper using newspaper or brown paper. Color it with markers or add stickers if you wish. Tie ribbon or yarn around the gift for the finishing touch. And don't forget to write a personal card. Tell the recipient that you've been thinking about them and wish them a happy holiday.

### Make it a habit

People tend to give presents for special occasions, such as holidays, birthdays, or graduations, but you can do it anytime. Gifts, especially homemade ones, are one way to show the people in your life how much you care about them. And that's a wonderful message to send any day of the year.



## Craft denim coasters

### What you need

- Pair of old jeans
- Clear nail polish
- Bleach gel pen (such as Clorox)
- Fabric glue

### Instructions

1. Cut denim into 4-by-4-inch squares. You'll need two squares to make one coaster. Dab clear nail polish on edges to keep them from fraying.
2. Place squares on a lined cookie sheet. Use a bleach gel pen to make a design of your choice. Let gel dry until firm, about one hour.
3. Rinse coasters under cold water until all bleach is removed. Let dry flat on paper towels.
4. To make a thicker coaster, glue a second denim square to the bottom of each one.



Pick your own design.



## Create a colorful bowl or vase

### What you need **Instructions**

- Plastic, ceramic, or glass cereal bowl (or jar)
  - Plastic wrap
  - Dish towel in a colorful pattern
  - White glue
  - Scissors
1. Turn bowl over and cover outside with plastic wrap.
  2. Cut dish towel into 8 to 10 pieces, about 2-by-3 inches each.
  3. Mix 1 cup of glue with  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of water. Dip fabric pieces in glue mixture and squeeze out the excess.
  4. Smooth fabric pieces onto the bottom of the bowl. Keep layering and smoothing pieces until you have covered the bowl.
  5. Let fabric dry overnight. Gently wiggle fabric bowl from the plastic-wrapped bowl. If it is a little sticky on the inside, let dry for one more hour.
  6. Trim top edges with scissors. Note: The bowl is a great place to hold keys or candy, but don't put liquid in it.

## Make a plant hanger

### What you need

- Acrylic or craft paint
- Bowl for mixing paint
- Cotton string
- Scissors
- Small plants in pots
- Pebbles
- Small glass jars, such as mustard or baby food

### Instructions

1. Stir a teaspoon of acrylic paint into a bowl filled with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water. Mix well.
2. Cut a 12-foot length of cotton string and soak in the paint water for 10 minutes. Squeeze out excess liquid and hang to dry.
3. Cut string into six 2-foot-long pieces. To make bottom knot, gather six ends together, then twist them into a knot, leaving 1 inch of string below knot to form a tassel.
4. Lay strings out flat on your work surface, with bottom knot closest to you. Split strings into three pairs (two strings each). Take one pair and twist it into a knot about 2" up from the bottom knot. Repeat with the other two pairs of string.
5. Spread string pairs flat, then separate all six strings. Twist string #2 and string #3 into a knot (2 inches above previous knots). Repeat with string #4 and string #5, and with string #6 and string #1.
6. Add pebbles to glass jar for drainage. Then gently lift plant and dirt from its pot and place in jar.
7. Insert jar between the knots, resting it on top of bottom knot. Knot the top, then hang from a hook.

