



## Fantastically Foolish Gift Ideas

The Motley Fool

By Selena Marinjian

It's the holiday season again. Sigh. If you're stressed out from wondering what to get for your various loved ones, calm down. Here are some clever ideas for you, many of which you can act on from the comfort of your desk.

### Heard on our boards

On our discussion boards, many Fools have been chatting about gifts. Here are some ideas:

alstroemeria said: "I'm thinking of canceling all gifts for a couple of years and taking us all on a safari or some other once-in-a-lifetime trip (my kids are in their 20s)."

mzoom offered: "I took a pottery on the wheel course at the local art Assoc. which was pretty cheap... and I was able to make around 20 pieces of pottery (large bowls, mugs, etc..) which will be perfect gifts. They cost me around \$5 or \$6 a piece if I divide out the cost of the class, so I think they've worked out to be great [living below your means] gifts."

SeattlePioneer gave his nephew "singing lessons with a singing coach in his city for his birthday. My nephew has been in eight community theater plays, and is highly motivated to improve his singing/dancing/acting skills. He was kind enough to call me up after taking his first lesson earlier in the week to tell me he'd learned a lot in his first lesson."

Other ideas I've noticed here and there include gift memberships to a zoo or a subscription to a local theater's season. Magazine subscriptions can also be great, and there are magazines for all kinds of interests. (Hint: You'll find many magazine subscription bargains on **eBay** (Nasdaq: EBAY), and **Amazon.com** (Nasdaq: AMZN) offers subscriptions, too.)

### A gift-idea board

You'll find gift ideas all over the place — even on our Surviving Cancer board. We even have a discussion board in Fooldom dedicated to sharing gift-giving ideas.

On it, oldaugie recounted her best gift ever: "For my 50th birthday, my partner sent letters to a wide variety of people in my life — either currently or in the past — and asked them to send a birthday card and to potentially share a fond memory of some connection we shared. Her plan was to give me one card starting 50 days before my actual birthday. I ended up with 95 cards — and was overwhelmed with the response. There were people I hadn't really been in touch with for years with whom I have reconnected." (Read more about it.)



I myself shared a bunch of ideas on that board — you can read them all there, or check the selection below:

*Newsweeks, New York Times, TV Guides, etc.*

If a friend was born in, say, 1965, you could look for things on eBay or Half.com from that year. These could be tied to their interests, such as movies or old mail-order catalogs.

There's a nifty big world of board and card games out there — giving a few new games to some people might work well. Here's an article I wrote on games, a link to our Games board's frequently asked questions, and a website that offers many good games. (Didja know that there's even a Motley Fool game out there?)

If someone grew up far away, you might find for them something from their hometown or home country. Perhaps a "University of Helsinki" t-shirt for someone from Finland, or postcards of Syria or South Dakota, if someone hails from there.

For my nieces, who had no kids' videos at home, I recently bought several dozen Disney movies in a few lots on eBay. It was a quick and economical way to give them a great collection of kids' movies.

Consider buying a friend a DVD of their favorite movie — ideally one that has a bunch of good extra stuff on it, like commentaries. Some friends might enjoy DVDs of favorite TV shows; you can now buy entire seasons of shows in single packages. (Who wouldn't enjoy a DVD set of *The Simpsons*? OK, maybe one or two people...)

If a friend has a favorite author or book, you might scout around for an autographed copy of it, or anything autographed by the writer.

If you're a good cook, you might give coupons for your home-cooked meals.

You might give gift certificates to fancy restaurants to people who normally don't go to such places, since it might be a special treat for them.

Think of supporting companies you're invested in. You can give a gift subscription to **Netflix** (Nasdaq: NFLX), for example, or See's chocolates, which is owned by Warren Buffett's **Berkshire Hathaway** (NYSE: BRKa, BRKb).

Finally, consider offering your time or skills — these gifts are often among the most appreciated. If your friend has bad vision, you might offer to read to him for an hour once a month. If you are good at fixing cars, you might offer to give a friend's vehicle a thorough checkup. If you're a good gardener, you might help someone else in their garden.



I read somewhere that experiences are more memorable than things, and it does ring true. So consider giving experiences — a special camping trip, a gift certificate for a spa day, or tickets to a basketball or football game, for example — whenever possible.

### **Give a nudge toward wealth**

If your loved ones have any interest in investing, or saving for a comfortable retirement, or you think they need to develop such interests, consider giving them a subscription to one of our investing newsletters. (You can try them out for yourself, too, for free.) See how well they've done and learn more about them.

For a gift that's more symbolic than substantive, consider websites where you can buy one share of a stock as a gift, including [registerstock.com](http://registerstock.com), [oneshare.com](http://oneshare.com), [firstshare.com](http://firstshare.com), and [frameastock.com](http://frameastock.com). It's not the smartest way to invest, since you might end up paying \$15 or more in fees to buy one \$30 share of stock (that would put you down 50 percent from the get-go). But if it's a gift, the recipient ends up with a \$30 stock that might one day be worth \$60 or more. It sure beats giving a sweater that never gets worn. This can be great for kids — **Disney** (NYSE: DIS), for example, has a very attractive stock certificate. Pixar (Nasdaq: PIXR) and *Motley Fool Inside Value* selection **Mattel** (NYSE: MAT) reportedly also have nice certificates.

### **Give to those who need it most**

And finally, consider giving some desperately needed gifts to those who have the least and need the most. If you're looking for a good way to do so, consider participating in our ninth annual charity drive, Foolanthropy. Once again, we're raising money together to support five impressive organizations. Please take a few minutes to at least learn about this year's featured organizations. (They'll truly be delighted just to have more people familiar with them and their work.) Then consider joining us in contributing a little something to them. Together, our Fool community has raised more than \$2 million in our past campaigns. If you need a break from your search for the perfect gift, take a few minutes to learn more about Foolanthropy.

*Amazon, Netflix, Pixar, and eBay are Motley Fool Stock Advisor picks.*

*Longtime Fool contributor Selena Maranjian's favorite discussion boards include Book Club, The Eclectic Library and Card & Board Games. She owns shares of Amazon.com, Berkshire Hathaway, Netflix and eBay. For more about Selena, view her bio and her profile. You might also be interested in these books she has written or co-written: The Motley Fool Money Guide and The Motley Fool Investment Guide for Teens. The Motley Fool is Fools writing for Fools.*

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