

5 Thoughtful Ideas for Holiday Giving

The holiday season is a great time to give, but that doesn't mean indiscriminate and excessive spending on gifts. Sure, when someone you care about needs or really wants something, it's hard to resist buying it for them. If it's within your financial means, why not?

However, it can be helpful to think about giving gifts in broader terms to maximize the impact. If we commit to spending wisely and with intention over the holidays, we can make a meaningful difference in someone's life.

Here are five ways to help capture the spirit of the holiday season:

- 1. Donate gifts to children in need.** Children from financially disadvantaged families may go without gifts during the holidays. After all, if it's a decision between putting food on the table or buying a new toy, parents must prioritize. If you know children who could use a gift to brighten their day, tactfully talk to their parents about your willingness to help. If they're receptive, find out what their kids would like or need the most. Also, most communities hold holiday toy drives for disadvantaged kids, so that's one more way to provide a gift for children in need. Another option is to donate a gift or cash to a children's hospital. It's tough being in the hospital – especially over the holidays – so it's rewarding to know that an ill or injured child will have presents to open.
- 2. Donate money on behalf of a loved one.** If you can't think of a suitable gift for someone, consider making a financial donation in their honour to their favourite charity or other worthwhile cause. Charitable organizations typically notify the person you're honouring that you have made a financial gift in their name. The honouree will appreciate your thoughtfulness and, as an extra bonus, you'll receive a tax credit if the chosen organization is a registered charity in Canada.
- 3. Pay for someone else's layaway.** This type of gift has become popular in recent years as more news stories surface regarding people's generosity. Many stores offer layaway plans to help customers with financial challenges spread out the payments of purchased items. If you know someone in this situation, you can ask the store about paying off the individual's layaway plan obligations. Or, if you wish, you can randomly choose a family in need and anonymously cover their store debt. "Paying it forward" can be immensely gratifying and the family receiving your gift will appreciate your kindness.
- 4. Volunteer your time and skills.** Gifts don't always require money. Many community organizations, such as food banks, hospitals, libraries, recreation centres, seniors' living facilities, etc., regularly welcome volunteers to support their staff and help operations run smoothly. Think about which organization aligns with your abilities, personality and availability, and then ask how you can volunteer with them. It's often said that volunteers gain just as much from their experience as the people they're helping. In most cases, it's true!

5. Another gift of your time. It's wonderful to volunteer at an organization in need, but you can also make it more personal and give your time to someone you know. For example, maybe you have a friend, sibling or other relative who works extremely hard to provide for their family. To give them a well-deserved break, you may wish to offer your services, such as cooking a meal, helping with grocery shopping, watching their kids or handling certain chores in their home. Who wouldn't appreciate a helping hand during the holidays when life seems to turn even more hectic than usual?

If you're looking to spend wisely and thoughtfully while giving back this holiday season, we can help.



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