

# Last Minute Gift Guide

December  
2014



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# Smartphone helps this season

(StatePoint) Millions of Americans find themselves focused on planning the perfect party, juggling a packed social schedule and shopping for the best holiday deals.

Nearly seven in 10 smartphone users are “always looking to improve productivity,” according to a global study by BlackBerry.

Don’t underestimate your smartphone. It can be your secret weapon to sanity.

To help, the experts at BlackBerry are sharing five savvy tips for using your smartphone to drive productivity during this busy season.

## Find Deals

Ensure you’re getting the best deals on holiday shopping. Activate the geolocation feature on your smartphone. Many retailers will be pushing special holiday discounts and offers to consumers shopping nearby or who have “checked in.” Additionally, apps such as Flipp allow you to browse flyers and weekly ads, highlight deals and clip items straight to your shopping list so you never miss a sale.

The holidays can also mean a hectic travel season – use travel apps to search hotels, find flights deals and track your itineraries.

## Set Reminders

Creating reminders is a seamless way to stay on top of day-to-day tasks that seem to double during the holidays. With apps such as SlickTasks you can boost productivity and focus on what needs to get done by creating and sorting tasks. You can build in reminders and keep track of what needs to get done.

## Bring Along Your Personal Assistant

Most smartphones are equipped with voice

recognition technology, allowing you to jot down notes, search the Web, add calendar updates, place calls and send messages, without typing. These “assistants” can prove highly useful during the holiday season.

Driving from store to store looking for the perfect gift? BlackBerry Assistant can be activated via Bluetooth and detect when you’re in the car and therefore unable to type. The assistant will take action based on your voice commands, helping you multi-task on-the-go.

## Don’t Be Camera Shy

Smartphone camera technology has improved over the past few years. For example, the new BlackBerry Passport has a 13-mega-pixel camera and is capable of taking the same high-quality photos as a traditional point and shoot camera. With the click of a button and the help of photo editing tools like Photo Studio, you can take beautiful photos of the holiday party and share with family and friends.

## Protect Yourself

Thieves are working overtime during the holidays.

When it comes to your smartphone, make sure security features are enabled. This includes password protection, as well as activating app permissions, particularly on banking.

For BlackBerry users, apps such as BlackBerry Protect will safeguard users in the case of a lost or stolen phone by allowing users to remotely lock, locate or wipe their smartphone.

With the tech tools and strategies, you can get to-dos done in record time this season.

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# Give family history

(StatePoint) Amidst the gifts, meals and parties of the holiday season, one word takes precedence – family. There’s no better time to begin learning about family roots, especially as you’re gathered together. And doing so is easier than ever.

While researching family history or exploring ethnic roots was once a chore, filled with library visits, interviews or public records inquiries, now you can conveniently traverse the genealogical landscape thanks to technology tools, such as mobile apps, social media and even affordable Ancestral DNA tests that enable you to find family stories you may not have known about.

Liven up the holidays and connect with those who mean the most by sitting down and chatting about family history. Here are some pointers to get started:

- Start with what you know: Using a website like Ancestry.com, or the Ancestry app (available on iOS and Android), enter the information you know into your family tree. Upload photos. Don’t have all the facts? Don’t worry. This is just the start.

- Take a DNA test: DNA isn’t just for TV shows and professional detectives. You now can be your own detective. Get your ethnic breakdown by percentage, such as 50 percent Irish and 50 percent Native American, and find out who else may be related to you with tools such as AncestryDNA. On average, folks taking the test have 60 matches to fourth – or closer – cousins in their results.

- Chat with relatives at family gatherings: Over the holidays, dive into your family history with relatives. Consider giving them family history resources like a DNA test. Record any interviews, particularly with the elderly, and take detailed notes. Ask everyone to bring photo albums and heirlooms. Any documents you create or collect you can attach to your online family tree for preservation.

- Look at the ancestry hints in your family tree: Ancestry provides hints about possible relatives to populate your family tree. These clues could give insight into your family’s legacy and connect you with lost relatives.

- Share your findings: Whether it’s at the next family reunion, or as a belated holiday gift wrapped and framed, share your findings with your family for a better understanding of your collective heritage. Plenty of websites offer printing services, so consider the perfect stocking stuffer: a calendar, book, poster or other gift that will bring more meaning to the holidays. Encourage family to try the app and fill in their own family tree.

For more researching tips, or to get started on your own search, visit [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com).

Whether it’s confirming a family legend, discovering an old yearbook photo of a grandfather before he left for World War II, or meeting a family you never knew existed, it’s never been easier to create memories and family traditions during the holiday season.

Tune into 100.3 FM KRDQ for all your favorite Christmas music and favorite music hits.

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With toys as tools for learning, you can help children as they reach their educational and developmental milestones.

# Right toys can help meet milestones

(StatePoint) This holiday season, keep in mind the notion that what your children play with can have a large impact on their interests and brain development. So when it comes to a walk down the toy aisle, parents are becoming more discerning, leading smart toymakers to design toys with a learning component that's equally as important as the fun.

VTech, a world leader in age-appropriate and developmental stage-based electronic learning products for children, works with a team of child development experts to assess toys and provide feedback.

The members of VTech's Expert Panel are offering some helpful holiday shopping hints to parents looking to foster their child's love of learning:

- Add it up: "Mathematical foundations provide the building blocks for future mathematical success, both in school and beyond," says Dr. Francis "Skip" Fennell, math educator.

"Toys that emphasize numbers, counting and beginning concepts with whole number operations will develop, support and encourage these crucial concepts and skills."

The Count & Chomp Dino, for example, introduces children to numbers, colors, shapes and foods.

- Age-appropriate: "Children's brains are developing at a remarkable speed," says Dr. Lise Eliot, an early childhood development expert. "Their toys should keep up with that growth."

Keep kids challenged with educational toys that are age-appropriate, so they are never bored or frustrated. Consider child-sized, kid-friendly

ly tablets, such as the InnoTab MAX, that are packed with educational, stage-based learning content.

- Full STEAM ahead: Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (collectively known as STEM) have gained more visibility in schools, along with the addition of arts to form STEAM.

However, says Dr. Carla C. Johnson, science and STEM expert, "It is still crucial to cultivate skills in these subjects and implement them in everyday learning. Educational toys can help kids develop self-confidence in the use and application of these important disciplines."

- Build vocabulary: "Children absorb new information like sponges. Take advantage of their blossoming interests with interactive toys that highlight letters of the alphabet, the sounds letters make and vocabulary," says Dr. Deborah Sharp Libby, early childhood language and reading expert. "Above all, don't forget the importance of reading to and with your children often!"

- Choose wisely: "Don't get carried away with the bells and whistles. You and your kids will quickly look past those. Instead, look for toys that actively engage your kids through technology, by deeply integrating games and learning," says Dr. Eric Klopfer, platform learning expert.

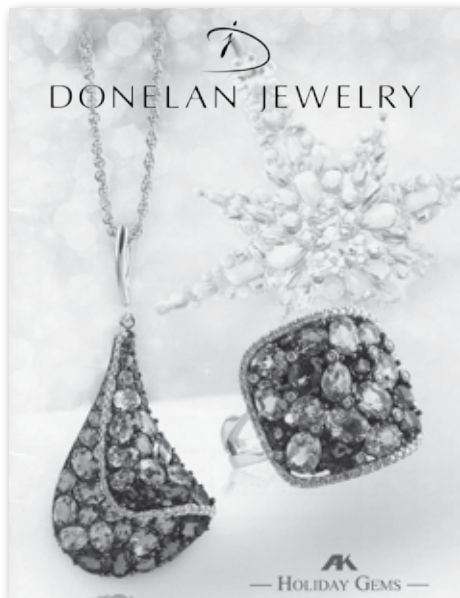
Remember, each child grows at his or her own pace, and there are few hard and fast deadlines when it comes to a child's milestones. For a detailed guideline, sorted by age group and area of development, along with other free parenting resources, visit [www.vtechkids.com/milestones](http://www.vtechkids.com/milestones).

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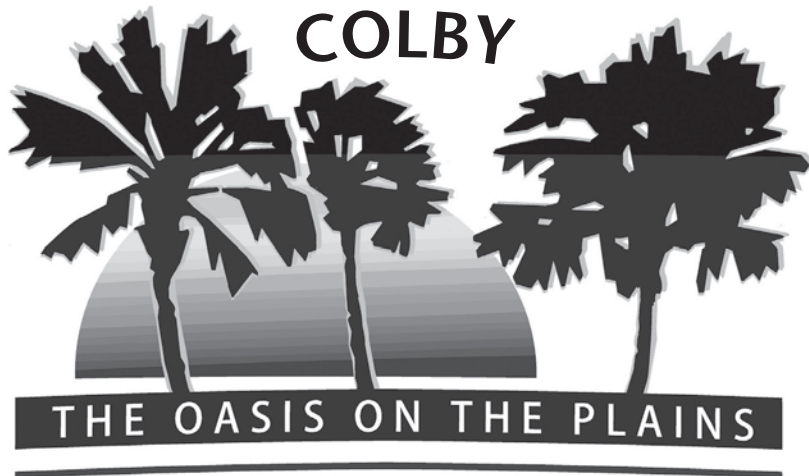
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# Get creative with party décor

(StatePoint) The look of your holiday party can be just as important as its other elements. So go above and beyond a plain table setting. Set the mood for your party and provide a striking visual to accompany the feast by creating a thematic holiday “tablescape.”

The experts at Bed Bath & Beyond are offering ideas for your entertaining décor:

## Rustic Living

A warm, woody vibe invites lingering conversation. Skip the tablecloth and add a burlap runner and rattan placemats in rich neutral hues to create a foundation of textures. Bring in warmth using soft green moss centerpieces and the sleek glitter of champagne flutes.

Mix shapes to give the table a casual, welcoming feel. For example, for a rectangular table, use round placemats with square plates. Likewise, use centerpieces of varied heights, such as glass candle holders of different sizes accented with rope and filled with moss. Add tall branches to the moss for a dramatic touch.

Remember, little details go a long way. Add sprigs of rosemary to Champagne for an evergreen feel and flavor.

## Glamorous Gold

To create an opulent look, think rich colors, vivid patterns and one of the hottest tabletop trends this season—gold.

When opting for a formal setting, avoid mixing shapes and limit your color palette. From placemats to china, repeat soft curves for a unified effect. Use a show-stopping place setting that creates richness and visual depth.

Use soft touches to keep the look from feeling cold, such as lush roses in full bloom or ferns spray painted gold for a pretty finishing touch.

## A Modern Classic

From retro-sweetness to sleek modernity, get the best of both festive worlds in one beautiful setting.

For a dark wood table, skip tablecloth and placemats and instead use clear chargers with gold beaded rims under the place settings.

Tall white taper candles, set in white porcelain candleholders, are a timeless touch that cast a warm glow for a welcoming ambiance. For the centerpiece, use a crystal bowl and crystal vases, filled with a bubbly mix of red ornaments. Swap a traditional runner for artfully strewn ribbons to add funky personality.

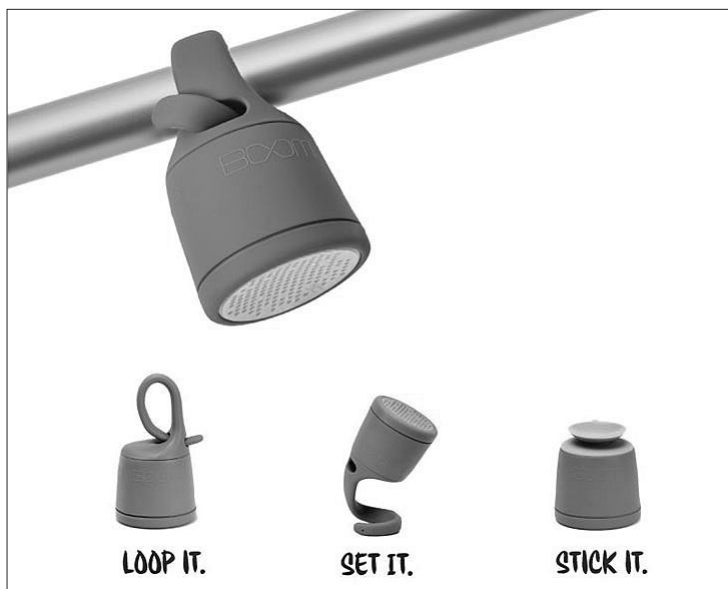
Use white cotton napkins topped with elegant gold-edged flatware and gold-rimmed drinking glasses for a look with enduring appeal. While gold is on-trend, such ornate accents have an undeniably traditional feel.

Top each place setting with a colorful ornament. A trick? Leave room in the bowl centerpieces so guests can drop in the bulbs from their place settings when dinner is served.

More ideas, decorating tips, recipes, printable décor, gift ideas, playlists and holiday inspiration can be found at the “Above & Beyond” blog at [Blog.bedbathandbeyond.com](http://Blog.bedbathandbeyond.com).

This holiday, wow your guests and set the mood for your feast with tablescapes that please the eye.

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# Save time and money on gifts

(StatePoint) The holiday season is here. Amid decorating your home, planning holiday parties and baking cookies for Santa, you might find yourself with very little time (and cash) for holiday shopping.

Luckily, the savings experts at Dollar General have a few gift ideas that are easy and fun to get you in the spirit this year.

### DIY Canning Jar Recipes

For an affordable and personable gift, try picking up a bag of cookie mix, a one dollar canning jar, ribbon, and a holiday gift tag. Place the cookie mix inside the canning jar, decorate with a ribbon and attach the directions for preparing the cookie mix on the holiday gift tag. With endless choices for cookie flavors, decorative gift tags and ribbons, you can create a one-of-a-kind and tasty gift for all of your friends, teachers and service providers.

### Gift Cards

If you've ever struggled to find a gift for someone that has everything, consider giving a gift card. Dress it up with a one dollar ornament or let your kids make a handmade holiday card for a unique twist. While the recipient enjoys choosing their own gift, you can celebrate with the time you saved!

### Auto-Renewal Options

Give the gift that keeps on giving this holiday season by signing your friends and family up for auto-renewal items from a discount retailer like Dollar General. You can schedule items like diapers, paper and cleaning products, coffee and more to be delivered on a



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This season, giving meaningful gifts doesn't mean you have to spend a lot of time or money.

weekly or monthly basis. This way, you can keep the spirit of the holidays going all year long by providing convenient and helpful products to those who mean the most to you.

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