

Technology Gift Ideas for 2007

By Edward Zeidan

This has been an exciting year for technology—prices keep dropping, items keep getting smaller, and great new features have been added. Below are some gift ideas and commentary.



Computers

Computers are always a great gift. If you're considering a desktop computer, the Dell Inspiron 531s is worth a look, with prices starting around \$500 including a flat screen. For Mac users, the iMac 20 is an excellent computer, and prices start at \$1,199, including the screen. For laptops, consider the Dell Inspiron 1420, which starts at \$799. Apple MacBook laptops start at \$1,099. Make sure to get at least 1GB RAM (2GB is better)

Digital Cameras

The days of carrying a bulky, heavy digital camera and separate camcorder are over. Many of the new compact digital cameras take fine pictures, and can shoot short video clips. Consider the Canon Powershot SD1000. About \$200. You'll also need a memory card for storing your pictures and video. 2GB is a good size.

Cell Phones/Personal Digital Assistants

Cell phones have been enhanced with lots of new features, such as music players, games, GPS directions, and organizers. It's no longer necessary to carry a separate cell phone and personal organizer. Apple's new iPhone is a combination cell phone, iPod music player, Internet browser and organizer in one very slick, easy to use device. Starting at \$399 it's pricey, but very cutting edge and cool. Blackberry phone/organizers are very popular, particularly among business users. Prices start at \$199, and many models feature color screens. For more options, check your phone providers' store or website for the latest offerings.

Music Players

The reigning king of music players keeps getting better. The new iPod touch looks just like the sleek new iPhone, with its gorgeous screen, music player, Internet browser, and personal organizer. Prices start at \$299. Microsoft's competing music player—Zune—has a huge 80GB hard drive to store thousands of songs, and a larger screen. Prices start at \$250. If you're looking for more basic players, prices start at \$79 for the tiny iPod Shuffle, and the Creative Zen Stone starts around \$35.

Video Gaming Consoles

For the video game enthusiast in your life, nothing beats the thrill of playing one of the new game consoles. Consoles for the latest systems start at \$279.99. The three most popular systems are Nintendo Wii, Sony Playstation, and Microsoft Xbox. The Sony Playstation 3 comes with a Blue Ray DVD player, which alone costs several hundred dollars.

TVs

The latest news in high definition TV is called 1080p. 1080p televisions offer better picture quality than the older standards—1080i or 720p. There are two competing technologies—LCD and Plasma. Get an LCD if you can. They use less energy, run cooler, and are easier to see in brightly lit rooms.

HD/Blue Ray DVD Player

Want to watch your movies with six times the detail? Check out the latest high-definition DVD players. Just like the days of Betamax and VHS, we have two competing standards shooting it out for dominance. Blue Ray, and HD both offer great picture quality. You'll need a high-definition TV to play the new DVDs. By the way, the new high-def DVD players will make your old DVDs look better too. Prices start at less than \$200.

GPS

GPS or Global Positioning Systems receivers provide turn-by-turn directions to your destination. For golfers the Sky Caddy provides great information about the course they're playing on. You can also get a GPS for the runner or hiker. Prices for GPS units start at around \$150.

Backup Devices

Looking for a gift that might save the day? Consider giving a gift of online backup \$49.99 per year. We've found a shockingly low number of people who actually backup their computers. We like iDrive.com or carbonite.com.

Bluetooth Cell Phone Headset

Talking on your cell phone while driving will require a hands-free device starting July 1, 2008. Many cell phones can use a Bluetooth wireless headset. Prices start at around \$50.

HP Printing Mailbox

Do you have a friend or relative who isn't comfortable using a computer, but wants to receive email and pictures? Consider the HP Printing Mailbox. For \$149.99, plus a \$9.99 a month, anyone can send emails and pictures to this little device, which only requires a standard telephone line. The emails and pictures print out automatically.

Edward Zeidan is the owner of Nerd4Rent, a technical support company in Lafayette that specializes in helping individuals and small businesses with their technology needs. He can be reached at 925.283.5666 or ezeidan@nerd4rent.com

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HOLIDAY HAZARDS FOR PETS

By Dr. Mona S. Miller

As the holidays approach, with decorations, aromas and good food around, I would like to describe some hazards these may present to our furry friends...

DECORATIONS ~ As unlikely as it seems, non-edible decorations are commonly eaten by dogs and cats—tinsel, scented candles, Christmas lights and ornaments are among the most popular items. These can cause trauma to the mouth (especially electrical cords) or cause digestive upset, even intestinal obstruction.

PLANTS ~ When ingested, poinsettia sap, holly berries and most parts of mistletoe can cause direct irritation to the digestive system, resulting in drooling, loss of appetite, vomiting and diarrhea. Treatment is based on the signs seen in the pet, and includes fluid support, stomach protectants and anti-nausea medication.

FOODS ~ Chocolate, grapes and raisins, macadamia nuts and bread dough all present some potentially serious hazards to our pets, especially for the dogs who carefully check out the frenzy of baking activity that occurs this time of year!

Chocolate is a well-known stimulant toxin for dogs—the darkness of the chocolate (% cocoa), the size of the dog, and the amount consumed are important factors in whether toxicity will occur. I would definitely be worried if a Maltese ate a full block of dark baking chocolate! The signs are similar to caffeine overdose, since the active ingredient (theobromine) is the same as in tea. Increase in heart rate and body temperature, agitation and even muscle tremors and seizures can occur within 4-6 hours after consumption.

Grapes and raisins produce kidney dis-

nausea and/or vomiting.

Macadamia nuts produce a unique syndrome in dogs. Dogs can get sick within 12 hours—signs are weakness, wobbliness, increase in body temperature, vomiting and pale gums. Dogs can return to normal with symptomatic care in 48 hours or less.

Bread dough ingestion produces an interesting combination of problems. In addition to the discomfort of eating a large amount of dough that expands, the warm environment of the stomach allows for fermentation and release of ethanol. Ethanol toxicity is comparable to anti-freeze poisoning which causes kidney failure.

Signs can be seen between 30 minutes to 2 hours after ingestion. This would definitely be considered an emergency.

As with any issue relating to your pet's medical care, it is best to call your veterinarian when questions arise.

Dr. Mona S. Miller lives in Lafayette with her 3 year old son and her yellow Labrador Retriever. She has worked at Four Seasons Animal Hospital in Lafayette since moving here in 2001. She attended Cal as an undergrad, and received her DVM from U.C. Davis. She can be reached at Four Seasons, 938-7700, or by email to MonaSDVM@aol.com.



ease in some dogs, but not all. Signs would be non-specific and include lethargy, loss of appetite,

Season's Greetings Lamorinda

Have a wonderful holiday and
Happy new year!



Thank you Lamorinda families and businesses for your support throughout the year. My family and I would like to wish you a very happy holiday season!

Wishing you all the best in 2008, Cheers!



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