



The 2026 Holiday Edition · 54 Gift Categories

# Holiday Gift Finder

Bill's Home Tech · 2026

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Honest picks for the people you love —  
Good, Better and Best for every budget,  
and no affiliate links, ever.

**Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal**

[BillsHomeTech.com](https://BillsHomeTech.com) · (330) 200-8042 · Atwater, Ohio

Free & printable — share it with someone who's shopping  
Last verified: October 2026



Book a visit —  
[billshometech.com/book](https://billshometech.com/book)

## A Letter From Bill

Every year around the holidays, people ask me the same question: “Bill, what should I get my mom, my husband, my grandkids — and am I about to overpay?” So I finally wrote it all down.

This isn't a list of whatever's trending or whatever pays me a commission — I don't take commissions, and there isn't a single affiliate link anywhere in here. The store links are plain searches so you can compare prices yourself. I picked these the way I'd advise my own family: honest about what's worth the money, honest about where a cheaper pick is plenty, and honest when a price looks high.

For every category you'll find three picks — Good, Better and Best — so there's something at every budget, plus a plain-English note on what actually matters when you're comparing options. Prices move constantly, especially during the holidays, so treat every number as a starting point and check the store's own page before you buy. Anything I've marked “verify” or “approx” is a spot I especially want you to double-check.

And here's the part I mean the most: if you buy one of these, the hard part is usually what happens after the box is open. Call or text me at 330-200-8042 and I'll come set it up for you — out of the box, photos and accounts moved over, and a friendly walk-through at your own pace.

Happy holidays, and happy shopping.

— **Bill Davis**

Bill's Home Tech · Atwater, Ohio

# What's Inside

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# Section A

## Computers & Productivity

11 gift categories · Good · Better · Best

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# Windows laptops

## What to look for:

The two numbers that matter most are memory and storage. Aim for 16GB of RAM, not 8GB — today's Windows runs sluggish on 8GB once you open a browser and a few programs. For storage, 512GB is the sweet spot; 256GB fills up fast with photos. A solid-state drive (SSD) is standard now, so avoid anything listing slow 'eMMC' storage. After that, look for all-day battery (10-plus hours) and a bright screen if they'll use it near windows. Don't overpay for flashy extras a casual user won't touch, and watch the fine print: the sticker price is often the stripped-down 8GB version, and bumping the memory up can quietly add \$200. Buy the configuration, not just the name on the lid.

GOOD

Dell XPS 13 (2026, Intel Core 5)

\$699 (\$599 for students; 16GB config ~\$899)

*A genuinely premium laptop at a budget price with all-day battery.*

**Key specs:** Intel Core 5 320 (Wildcat Lake) · 8GB RAM (step up to 16GB for ~\$899) · 512GB SSD · 13.4-inch 2.5K 120Hz touch display · ~14.5 hr battery, 2.2 lb, Wi-Fi 7

**Best for:** Students and everyday users who want a nice machine without overspending

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

BETTER

ASUS Zenbook 14 OLED (2026, UX3480)

\$799 (Snapdragon, 16GB); Intel/higher-RAM configs ~\$999 — verify (check current price)

*A light, well-built thin-and-light with a gorgeous OLED screen.*

**Key specs:** Snapdragon X processor (Intel/AMD variants exist) · 16GB RAM · 256GB–512GB SSD · 14-inch 1920x1200 OLED · Ceraluminium build, ~2.43 lb

**Best for:** Someone who wants a portable, good-looking everyday laptop

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

**BEST****Lenovo Yoga Pro 9i 16 (Gen 11) Aura Edition****~\$1,979 and up —  
verify (check current  
price)**

*A MacBook Pro-class powerhouse with a stunning Tandem OLED display for creative work.*

**Key specs:** Intel Core Ultra 9 386H (Panther Lake) · 16-inch 3.2K 120Hz Tandem OLED, up to 1,000 nits · NVIDIA RTX 5060 (up to RTX 5070) · 32GB RAM / 1TB SSD · ~4.2 lb, 92.5Wh battery

**Best for:** Creators, photo/video editors, and power users

**Where to buy:** [Best Buy](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Walmart](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Students, families, and everyday users who prefer Windows

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [Ultrabook Review](#)
- [PCWorld](#)

## Apple MacBooks

### What to look for:

A MacBook will last most folks five or six years, so the two things to get right up front are memory and storage, because neither can be upgraded later. For memory (RAM), 16GB is the comfortable number now; the budget MacBook Neo ships with 8GB, which is fine for web, email and writing but tight if you keep lots of tabs and apps open. For storage, 256GB fills up fast with photos; 512GB is the sweet spot for most people. Don't overpay for a Pro model unless the person edits video or does serious creative work — an Air handles everyday life beautifully and runs cool and silent. Lastly, the screen size (13 vs 15 inch) is really about portability versus comfort, not power. Buy the chip generation that's current and you're set for years.

**GOOD****Apple MacBook Neo (A18 Pro, 2026)****\$599 (256GB); \$699 for 512GB + Touch ID — verify (check current price)***Apple's first true budget laptop, with premium build quality at a Chromebook price.***Key specs:** A18 Pro chip (6-core CPU / 5-core GPU) · 8GB memory · 256GB storage · 13-inch Liquid Retina display (60Hz) · ~16 hr battery (no MagSafe, no backlit keys)**Best for:** Students and first-time buyers who mainly browse, write and stream**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)**BETTER****Apple MacBook Air 13-inch (M5, 2026)****\$1,099 (15-inch is \$1,299)***The default choice for most people: fast, fanless, light and great battery life.***Key specs:** M5 chip · 16GB memory · 512GB storage · Fanless and silent, ~18 hr battery · Wi-Fi 7 via N1 chip**Best for:** Everyday users, families and anyone wanting one laptop that does it all**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)**BEST****Apple MacBook Pro 14-inch (M5 Pro, 2026)****\$2,199 (a new OLED-touchscreen MacBook Pro now also exists from \$2,899)***Serious horsepower and a brighter display for demanding creative work — now the value flagship as a new OLED model sits above it.***Key specs:** M5 Pro chip · 14.2-inch Liquid Retina XDR mini-LED, 120Hz · 24GB+ unified memory · 1TB storage · 3x Thunderbolt 4, HDMI, SDXC, MagSafe 3**Best for:** Video editors, developers and photographers who need real performance**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)**★ Great gift for:**

Students, everyday users, and creative pros

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [BGR](#)
- [Engadget](#)
- [BGR](#)

# Chromebooks

## What to look for:

A Chromebook runs Google's ChromeOS instead of Windows. It's simple, boots in seconds, stays quiet, and shrugs off viruses, which makes it a wonderful machine for email, web browsing, YouTube, and schoolwork. A couple of things really matter. First, check the Auto Update Expiration date — the year Google stops sending security updates. Newer models are good until around 2033 to 2034, so avoid old clearance units. Second, look for the 'Chromebook Plus' badge; it guarantees at least 8GB of memory, a roomier 128GB of storage, and enough muscle for photos and video calls, which is worth the small step up. Aim for 8GB RAM if you can. Don't overpay for huge storage, since most files live in the cloud. For a gift, 8GB memory and a touchscreen are the sweet spot.

GOOD

### Asus Chromebook CX15 (CX1505)

\$269 — verify (varies by config; higher Core 3/8GB SKUs cost more)

*A big, bright 15.6-inch screen for everyday browsing and email at a genuinely low price.*

**Key specs:** 15.6-inch 1080p display · Intel Celeron N50 or Core 3 N355 · 4–8GB RAM · 64–128GB storage · Full-size keyboard w/ numpad; updates into the 2030s

**Best for:** First-time users, grandparents, and anyone who just wants simple web and email

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

BETTER

### Acer Chromebook Plus 515 (CB515-2H)

\$399 — verify (prices fluctuate over the holidays)

*A Chromebook Plus with real Intel power and surprisingly good speakers for the money.*

**Key specs:** 15.6-inch 1080p IPS display · Intel Core i3/i5, 8GB RAM · 128–256GB SSD · Chromebook Plus certified (local AI, Gemini) · Strong stereo speakers

**Best for:** Families and students who want snappy performance for video calls, photos, and multitasking

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Lenovo Chromebook Plus 14****\$649 (16GB/256GB  
config ~\$749)**

*A gorgeous OLED screen, fanless silence, and all-day battery — the nicest Chromebook made.*

**Key specs:** 14-inch 1920x1200 OLED touchscreen · MediaTek Kompanio Ultra 910 (50-TOPS NPU), fanless · 12–16GB RAM, 128–256GB storage · Multi-day battery life · Dolby Atmos audio

**Best for:** Someone who wants a premium, beautiful laptop for writing, streaming, and travel

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Students, first-time users, and anyone who mostly lives on the web

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Notebookcheck](#)
- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [Tech Advisor](#)

## Desktop PCs & all-in-ones

### What to look for:

The first question is really about shape. A tower is a big box that sits under the desk and connects to a separate monitor; it's powerful and easy to repair, but bulky. An all-in-one (like Apple's iMac or an HP 27-inch) tucks the whole computer behind the screen, so there's just one cord and nothing to assemble, which is wonderful for someone who wants it to just work. A mini PC (like the Mac mini) is a tiny box, but remember it does NOT come with a monitor, keyboard, or mouse, so you'd need those already or have to buy them. That's the most common gotcha — folks buy a bargain mini box and are surprised there's no screen. For most home users, aim for at least 16GB of memory and a 512GB solid-state drive so it stays quick for years. Don't overpay for gaming horsepower a card player or email writer will never touch.

**GOOD****Apple Mac mini (M6, 2026)**

**\$899 base (M5 Pro step-up \$1,699) — verify (AI-era RAM/SSD costs pushed this up from the old \$599)**

*A tiny, quiet, fast computer for anyone who already owns a monitor and keyboard.*

**Key specs:** Apple M6 chip (M5 Pro on step-up) · 16GB unified memory · 256GB SSD base · 3x Thunderbolt 5, 2.5GbE, Wi-Fi 7 · Compact aluminum body — monitor/keyboard NOT included

**Best for:** Someone who already has a screen and wants a small, speedy Mac

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****HP All-in-One 27 (Core Ultra 5, 2026)**

**\$850–\$1,100 — verify (prices fluctuate over the holidays)**

*A Windows all-in-one with the whole computer built into the screen, so there's nothing to assemble.*

**Key specs:** Intel Core Ultra 5 processor · 16GB DDR5 memory · 512GB–1TB SSD · 27-inch FHD display, pop-up webcam · Keyboard and mouse included

**Best for:** A Windows user who wants one tidy machine with everything in the box

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Apple iMac 24-inch (M4, 2024)**

**\$1,299 (an M6 refresh is expected around end of 2026)**

*The simplest, prettiest all-in-one — one cord, a gorgeous screen, and it just works.*

**Key specs:** Apple M4 chip · 16GB unified memory · 256GB SSD (base) · 24-inch 4.5K Retina display · Color-matched keyboard and mouse included

**Best for:** Anyone who wants a beautiful, fuss-free desktop that stays current for years

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Home users and grandparents who want a reliable everyday desktop

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Macworld](#)
- [The Verge](#)
- [Windows Central](#)

# iPads

## What to look for:

With iPads, the honest truth is that almost any current model will feel fast and last for years, so don't overpay for power you'll never use. The regular iPad (A16) is plenty for email, video calls, browsing, reading and streaming, and it's the one most folks should buy. Step up to an iPad Air only if someone wants to draw, edit photos or do real multitasking, and save the iPad Pro for working artists and video editors. Two common mistakes: paying for cellular when home and coffee-shop Wi-Fi is all they'll use, and buying the smallest 128GB storage if they'll keep lots of photos or shows offline. Also remember the Apple Pencil and keyboard are sold separately. The tiny iPad mini is lovely for travel and reading, but its screen is cramped for everyday work.

### GOOD

#### Apple iPad (A16, 11th generation)

~\$449 — verify (Apple raised the price from \$349 in mid-2026)

*The right iPad for almost everyone, at the friendliest price.*

**Key specs:** 11-inch Liquid Retina display (60Hz) · A16 chip · 128GB base storage · Works with Apple Pencil (USB-C) and 1st-gen · All-day battery

**Best for:** Everyday use: email, browsing, video calls and streaming

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

### BETTER

#### Apple iPad Air 11-inch (M4)

\$599 (13-inch is \$799)

*Faster chip and a nicer build for people who want room to grow.*

**Key specs:** 11-inch Liquid Retina display · M4 chip · 12GB RAM · Supports Apple Pencil Pro · Wi-Fi 7, Touch ID in top button

**Best for:** Students and hobbyists who sketch, edit photos or multitask

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

### BEST

#### Apple iPad Pro 11-inch (M5)

\$999 (Wi-Fi, 256GB)

*Top-tier performance and screen for serious creative work.*

**Key specs:** 11-inch Ultra Retina Tandem OLED · M5 chip · ProMotion 120Hz · 12GB RAM base · Thunderbolt / USB-C, Face ID

**Best for:** Artists, designers and video editors who work on a tablet

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

the whole family (good pick) or a creative pro (best)

Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [TechRadar](#)

## Android/other tablets

### What to look for:

If the person you're shopping for lives in the Android or Samsung world (an Android phone, a Google or Samsung account), a matching tablet just feels natural and shares apps easily. The nice surprise with Samsung's Galaxy Tab line is that the S Pen stylus is included in the box, which saves you the extra money Apple charges. For most people a mid-range Galaxy Tab is more than enough; the giant, pricey 'Ultra' models are really for professionals who want to replace a laptop. Watch two things: a keyboard case is almost always sold separately and can add a lot to the cost, and cheap no-name tablets (and basic Amazon Fire tablets) are fine for a child or a bedside Netflix screen but feel sluggish for daily work. Check that the tablet promises several years of software updates.

**GOOD****Samsung Galaxy Tab S10 FE**

**\$449–\$499 — verify (a  
~\$50 price bump was  
reported in 2026)**

*Includes the S Pen and gets years of updates for a sensible price.*

**Key specs:** 10.9-inch LCD display, 90Hz · Exynos 1580 chip, 8GB RAM · S Pen included · 8,000mAh battery, 45W charging · 7 years of OS updates

**Best for:** Everyday streaming, notes and browsing on a budget

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****Samsung Galaxy Tab S11**

**\$799 (12GB/256GB  
Wi-Fi)**

*A sharp AMOLED screen and strong performance for the price.*

**Key specs:** 11-inch Dynamic AMOLED display · MediaTek Dimensity 9400+ · 12GB RAM, 256GB storage · S Pen included · 8,400mAh battery, 45W charging

**Best for:** Students and note-takers who want a premium feel without going Ultra

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Samsung Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra****\$1,199.99 (256GB)**

*A huge, gorgeous screen that can genuinely stand in for a laptop.*

**Key specs:** 14.6-inch Dynamic AMOLED 2X, 120Hz · MediaTek Dimensity 9400+ · 12GB RAM, 256GB storage · S Pen included (keyboard sold separately) · 11,600mAh battery

**Best for:** Power users who want an Android tablet to replace a laptop

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

the Samsung/Android loyalist in the family

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Tech Advisor](#)
- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [PhoneArena](#)

## Computer monitors

### What to look for:

A good monitor is one of the nicest upgrades you can give someone who stares at a screen all day, and you don't need to spend a fortune. For most people a 27-inch screen is the sweet spot, and 4K resolution makes text crisp and easy on the eyes. The biggest money-saver: unless the person plays fast-action video games, you can ignore sky-high refresh rates (120Hz is plenty) and fancy 'HDR' marketing. Two things people forget: make sure the stand tilts and raises so it sits at a comfortable height, and check the connections match their computer. A single USB-C monitor can charge a laptop and connect it with one cable, which is wonderfully tidy for anyone with a modern laptop. Also confirm a cable is included; some leave out DisplayPort cables.

**GOOD****Dell S2725QS (27-inch 4K)**

**\$299 — verify**  
(frequently on sale  
\$240–280)

*An outstanding-value 4K office screen that makes everything look sharp.*

**Key specs:** 27-inch 4K IPS, 120Hz · Height-adjustable, tilt and swivel stand · HDMI 2.1 and DisplayPort · Built-in speakers, AMD FreeSync · RTINGS office score 8.4

**Best for:** Home-office and everyday desktop use

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

**BETTER****Dell UltraSharp U2725QE (27-inch 4K Thunderbolt 4)****\$630–\$710 street —  
verify (check current  
price)***One Thunderbolt cable charges the laptop and connects everything, with excellent color — now 120Hz.***Key specs:** 27-inch 4K IPS Black panel, 120Hz · Thunderbolt 4 with 140W power delivery · Built-in USB hub, KVM and RJ45 Ethernet · Factory-calibrated color · Fully adjustable stand**Best for:** Laptop users who want a tidy, single-cable desk**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)**BEST****Dell UltraSharp U4025QW (40-inch 5K2K Thunderbolt)****\$1,430–\$1,900 — verify  
(price has fallen  
through 2026)***A massive curved ultrawide that replaces two monitors with one.***Key specs:** 40-inch 5K2K (5120x2160) curved IPS Black · 120Hz refresh · Thunderbolt 4 with 140W power delivery · Built-in KVM, USB hub and RJ45 · Height-adjustable stand**Best for:** The person who has everything and a big desk**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)**★ Great gift for:**

the work-from-home desk upgrader

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Monitor Nerds](#)
- [TweakTown](#)
- [RTINGS](#)

## Printers (home/photo)

### What to look for:

The sticker price is the smallest part of what a printer costs you. The real money is in ink, and that's where folks get burned. Those cheap \$60 printers are a trap: the replacement cartridges can cost almost as much as the printer, and they run dry fast. For anyone who prints regularly, a refillable 'ink tank' printer (Epson EcoTank or Canon MegaTank) costs more up front but pennies per page after, and a set of ink can last a year or two. Buy name-brand ink, not mystery refills. The other headache is Wi-Fi setup, which can be genuinely maddening. Many printers only connect to the 2.4GHz network, not 5GHz, so if setup stalls, that's usually why. Pick a trusted brand (Brother, Canon, Epson, HP), keep it on and

connected, and run a test page now and then so it doesn't clog.

**GOOD****Epson EcoTank ET-2800****\$199–\$229 — verify  
(widely \$199.99)**

*Refillable tanks mean you stop buying costly cartridges forever.*

**Key specs:** All-in-one print/copy/scan · Refillable ink tanks (bottles, not cartridges) · Ships with up to ~2 years of ink · Wi-Fi + USB · No automatic double-sided printing

**Best for:** Light home users tired of expensive cartridges

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****Epson EcoTank ET-4850****\$399–\$499 — verify  
(Epson list is now  
\$499.99; sales  
~\$399–459)**

*Same cheap bottled ink, plus a document feeder and fax for real paperwork.*

**Key specs:** All-in-one with auto document feeder · Refillable ink tanks, ~90% cheaper ink per page · Auto 2-sided printing · Fax + Ethernet + Wi-Fi · 2.4GHz/5GHz Wi-Fi

**Best for:** Busy households and home offices that print and scan a lot

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Epson EcoTank Photo ET-8550****\$599–\$749 — verify  
(Epson list \$749.99;  
often ~\$599.99)**

*Six-ink refillable system makes gorgeous photos up to 13x19 at a few cents each.*

**Key specs:** 6-color Claria ET photo inks · Wide-format prints up to 13x19 inches · ~4 cents of ink per 4x6 photo · All-in-one print/copy/scan, touchscreen · Wi-Fi + USB + Ethernet

**Best for:** Photographers and crafters who print large, frequent photos at home

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Grandparents, home-office workers, and photo hobbyists

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [RTINGS](#)
- [Imaging Resource](#)
- [TechRadar](#)

## Keyboards & mice

### What to look for:

The two things that matter most are comfort and a connection that just works. If your hands or wrists ache after a while, look at ergonomic shapes: a gently curved or split keyboard keeps wrists straighter, and a 'vertical' mouse lets your hand rest like a handshake instead of flat, which many people find eases strain. For wireless, there are two flavors: a tiny USB receiver that plugs into one computer, or Bluetooth that pairs with phones and tablets too. The nicer models do both and switch between several devices with a button. Watch the battery question: some use throwaway AA/AAA batteries, while the better ones recharge over USB-C, which is far less fuss. Avoid the dirt-cheap no-name combos; they feel mushy and the wireless drops. A quiet mouse and backlit keys are small touches that older eyes and shared rooms appreciate.

#### GOOD

#### Logitech MK540 Advanced Wireless Combo

**\$50–\$55 — verify**  
(MSRP \$59.99, often on sale)

*A reliable, comfortable keyboard-and-mouse set that just works out of the box.*

**Key specs:** Full-size keyboard with palm rest · Contoured right-handed mouse · Single tiny USB (Unifying) receiver · Long AA/AAA battery life (~36-mo keyboard) · Plug-and-play, no software needed

**Best for:** Anyone who wants a no-fuss, affordable wireless set

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

#### BETTER

#### Logitech MX Keys S + MX Master 3S Combo

**\$160–\$180 — verify**  
(newer MX Master 4 mouse now also sold separately)

*The gold-standard productivity pair: rechargeable, near-silent, pairs with three devices.*

**Key specs:** Backlit MX Keys S keyboard with Smart Actions · MX Master 3S quiet, 8K-DPI precise mouse · USB-C rechargeable (no disposable batteries) · Bluetooth + Logi Bolt, switch across 3 devices · Works with Windows and Mac

**Best for:** Desk workers and anyone juggling a laptop, desktop, and tablet

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Logitech Ergo K860 Keyboard + MX Vertical Mouse****\$200–\$230 — verify**  
(K860 \$129.99 + MX  
Vertical \$99.99, sold  
separately)*A split, curved keyboard and handshake-angle mouse built to ease wrist strain.***Key specs:** Split, curved K860 with memory-foam wrist rest · MX Vertical 57-degree ergonomic mouse · Both wireless (Bluetooth + Logi Bolt) · MX Vertical is USB-C rechargeable · Designed to reduce wrist/forearm strain**Best for:** Anyone with wrist or hand discomfort who types all day**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)**★ Great gift for:**

Remote workers, writers, and anyone with achy wrists

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [RTINGS](#)
- [RTINGS](#)
- [PC Gamer](#)

## External storage — portable SSDs & backup drives

### What to look for:

First, know the two types. A hard drive (HDD) spins a disk inside; it's cheaper per gigabyte and holds tons, but it's slower and can be damaged by a drop. A solid-state drive (SSD) has no moving parts, so it's fast, tough, and pocket-sized, but costs more. For a safety-net backup of a whole computer's worth of photos, a roomy HDD is the value play. For carrying files or working off the drive, get an SSD. Heads up for 2026: a NAND flash shortage has pushed SSD prices up sharply this year, so the two SSD picks below cost well above their usual ranges — compare before you buy. Two gotchas. One, a drive only backs you up if backups actually happen, so set up automatic backup (built into Windows and Mac). Two, speed claims only matter if your computer's USB port is modern enough. Buy a trusted brand (Samsung, Crucial, Western Digital, SanDisk) and keep one backup somewhere else in case of fire or theft.

## GOOD

## WD My Passport (HDD) 2TB

**\$90–\$105 — verify  
(check current price)***Loads of cheap space for a set-and-forget backup of your whole life's photos.***Key specs:** 2TB spinning hard drive · Hardware 256-bit AES encryption + password · Bundled backup software · USB 3.0, powered by the cable · 3-year limited warranty**Best for:** Families wanting an affordable full-computer backup**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

## BETTER

## Crucial X9 Pro Portable SSD 2TB

**\$150–\$200 — verify  
(NAND shortage has  
pushed 2TB above its  
old \$140–170 band)***Fast, tiny, and durable; the everyday value pick for carrying files.***Key specs:** Up to ~1,050 MB/s read/write · Pocket-sized, no moving parts (~65 g) · USB-C (USB 3.2 Gen 2) · IP55 dust/water + drop-resistant to 7.5 ft · Works with PC, Mac, and many tablets**Best for:** Students and anyone moving photos or video between devices**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

## BEST

## Samsung T9 Portable SSD 2TB

**\$300–\$600 — verify  
(abnormally high due  
to the 2026 NAND  
shortage; original  
MSRP was \$240)***One of the fastest, most reliable mainstream USB SSDs, rugged and compact — if you can stomach today's inflated price.***Key specs:** Up to ~2,000 MB/s read/write · USB 3.2 Gen 2x2 (20 Gbps), USB-C · Capacities up to 4TB · Rubberized, drop-resistant shell · 256-bit AES encryption, 5-year warranty**Best for:** Photographers and creators who work directly off the drive**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

## ★ Great gift for:

Shutterbugs, students, and anyone without a backup yet

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [StorageReview](#)
- [PCWorld](#)
- [StorageReview](#)

## USB-C hubs & laptop adapters

### What to look for:

Match the hub to what they actually plug in: HDMI for a monitor or TV (confirm it does 4K), USB-A for older accessories, an SD slot for camera cards, and USB-C “Power Delivery” pass-through so the laptop still charges through the hub — 100W covers most laptops. A short captive cable is handier than a rigid plug. For two monitors or heavy daily use, step up to a powered dock instead of a bus-powered hub.

#### GOOD

#### UGREEN Revodok 105 (5-in-1 USB-C hub)

\$25 (verify)

*The value pick: 4K HDMI, two USB-A ports, and 100W pass-through charging in a pocketable adapter.*

**Key specs:** 4K HDMI (30Hz) · 2x USB-A 3.0 · 100W USB-C Power Delivery pass-through · Plug-and-play (no drivers) · Compact aluminum body

**Best for:** A student or laptop user who just needs HDMI and a couple of USB ports

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Walmart](#)

#### BETTER

#### Anker 341 USB-C Hub (7-in-1)

\$35 (verify)

*Adds SD/microSD card slots on top of HDMI and USB-A — the sweet spot for most laptops and a camera owner.*

**Key specs:** 4K HDMI · SD + microSD card readers · 2x USB-A + USB-C data · 100W PD pass-through · Reliable, widely reviewed

**Best for:** Everyday use plus offloading photos from camera cards

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

#### BEST

#### Anker 555 USB-C Hub (8-in-1)

\$50 (verify)

*The do-it-all pick under \$50: adds wired Ethernet for rock-solid internet, plus 4K HDMI, card slots, and fast USB.*

**Key specs:** 4K HDMI · Gigabit Ethernet · SD + microSD readers · USB-A/USB-C data ports · 100W PD pass-through

**Best for:** A home-office or dorm setup that wants wired Ethernet and lots of ports

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

### ★ Great gift for:

Students and anyone whose slim laptop is short on ports — a cheap gift that gets used every day.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [The Gadgeteer](#)
- [PCWorld](#)



# Section B

## Phones & Wearables

11 gift categories · Good · Better · Best

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# iPhones

## What to look for:

Pick the iPhone by the person's hands and habits, not the spec sheet. For most people the regular iPhone does everything they'll ever use — fast enough, great camera, all-day battery. You only step up to a Pro for serious photography or video, or if you simply want the biggest screen and longest battery. A couple of honest gotchas: Apple dropped the cheapest 128GB storage tier on the base and 'e' models, so the real starting price crept up; and the ultra-thin 'Air' looks lovely but has a single camera and shorter battery, so it's a style choice, not a value one. The lineup is in an unusual spot for holiday 2026: Apple split its launch, so the iPhone 18 Pro and 18 Pro Max shipped in September 2026, but the standard iPhone 18, the budget iPhone 18e, and the iPhone Air 2 were pushed to spring 2027. That means the current 'regular' iPhone to buy right now is still the iPhone 17, and the current budget model is the iPhone 17e. Always confirm the exact lineup and prices at [apple.com](https://apple.com) before you commit. If money's tight, last year's model or a certified-refurbished Pro is a smart, honest buy.

**GOOD**

### Apple iPhone 17e

~\$599 (starts at 256GB; verify — check current price)

*The most phone for the least money in Apple's lineup — all the essentials, none of the premium markup. It replaced the iPhone 16e in spring 2026.*

**Key specs:** A-series chip fast enough for years of use · 6.1-inch OLED display · Single strong 48MP main camera · Face ID, USB-C · 256GB base storage, long Apple software support

**Best for:** Someone who wants a dependable iPhone and doesn't care about extra cameras or the latest everything.

**Where to buy:** [Apple](https://apple.com) · [Best Buy](https://bestbuy.com) · [Walmart](https://walmart.com)

**BETTER**

### Apple iPhone 17

~\$799 (starts at 256GB)

*The default choice for most people — fast, smooth 120Hz screen, excellent cameras, no compromises. It's still the current standard iPhone because the iPhone 18 was delayed to spring 2027.*

**Key specs:** 6.3-inch 120Hz OLED display · Dual 48MP rear cameras · All-day battery · USB-C, Face ID · 256GB base storage

**Best for:** Almost anyone upgrading from an older iPhone who wants it to feel new and last years.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](https://amazon.com) · [Best Buy](https://bestbuy.com) · [Walmart](https://walmart.com) · [Target](https://target.com)

**BEST****Apple iPhone 18 Pro Max****~\$1,299 and up**

*Biggest screen, longest battery, and the best camera system Apple makes — the newest flagship, shipping since September 2026.*

**Key specs:** 6.9-inch 120Hz display · Triple 48MP camera system with telephoto zoom · Longest battery in the lineup · Storage up to 2TB · Titanium build, A20 Pro-class chip

**Best for:** The photo/video enthusiast or heavy user who wants the top of the line and will keep it a long time.

**Where to buy:** [Apple](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Amazon](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

The Apple loyalist upgrading from an aging iPhone

Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

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## Android smartphones

### What to look for:

On the Android side you're really choosing between two families: Google's Pixel, which has the cleanest software and the best point-and-shoot camera with the longest update promise, and Samsung's Galaxy, which has the biggest, brightest screens and the widest range of models and prices. Both are excellent. Things to check: how long the maker promises software updates (Google and Samsung now offer about seven years, which is huge for a gift that should last), whether the person wants a plain screen or Samsung's extra features, and the size — the 'Ultra' and 'XL' models are large and heavy. The huge zoom numbers you see advertised (100x and up) look impressive but the photos get mushy past about 10x, so don't pay extra for the marketing. The current flagships for holiday 2026 are Google's Pixel 11 family (launched August 2026) and Samsung's Galaxy S26 family (launched February 2026) — verify the exact model and price before buying.

**GOOD**

## Google Pixel 11

~\$899 (starts at 256GB; often discounted — verify)

*Clean software, the famously good Pixel camera, and years of updates — superb value. It replaced the Pixel 10 in August 2026.*

**Key specs:** 6.3-inch OLED display · Google Tensor G6 chip with on-device AI features · Excellent main + ultrawide cameras · ~7 years of OS/security updates · 256GB base, 12GB RAM, all-day battery

**Best for:** Someone who wants a no-fuss Android with a great camera and a clean screen.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER**

## Samsung Galaxy S26

~\$799-\$899 (verify — launch pricing varied by storage)

*The mainstream flagship for most people — gorgeous screen, strong cameras, loads of features. The current base Galaxy, out since February 2026.*

**Key specs:** ~6.3-inch bright AMOLED display · Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5 flagship chip · Triple rear cameras · Galaxy AI features · ~7 years of updates

**Best for:** The person who likes Samsung's polish and extra software features.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST**

## Google Pixel 11 Pro XL (or Samsung Galaxy S26 Ultra)

~\$1,299 (verify)

*Top-rated big-screen Android — best-in-class cameras and a stunning large display. The Pixel wins on AI and value; the Galaxy S26 Ultra wins on raw performance and the S Pen.*

**Key specs:** ~6.8-6.9-inch high-brightness OLED (up to 3,600 nits on Pixel) · Pro multi-camera system with optical zoom · Top-tier chip (Tensor G6 / Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5) · ~7 years of updates · Large battery, fast charging

**Best for:** The Android enthusiast or mobile photographer who wants the biggest and best.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

### ★ Great gift for:

The Android fan who loves a great camera and a clean phone

Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

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# Simple & easy phones (seniors and kids' first phones)

## What to look for:

Two very different needs here, so match the phone to the person. For an older parent or grandparent, the big things are: large text and simple menus, loud clear audio, hearing-aid compatibility (look for an 'M4/T4' rating), long battery life, and ideally a dedicated emergency/SOS button with a response service. A flip phone is often the kindest choice if smartphones feel overwhelming; a simplified smartphone is better if they want photos, video calls, and texts. For a child's first phone, the priority flips to safety and control: you want parental controls, contact approval, location sharing, and limited or no open internet and social media. Kid-focused brands (Gabb, Bark, Pinwheel, Troomi) build those controls in; a cheap regular smartphone does not. Gotcha: many senior/kid phones require a monthly plan from that brand (and often a one-time activation fee) — factor that into the real cost. Lively refreshed its senior line in 2026, so the current models are the Jitterbug Flip3 and Jitterbug Smart5.

GOOD

Consumer Cellular IRIS Easy Flip (senior) / Gabb Phone 4 (kids)

IRIS ~\$59; Gabb Phone 4 ~\$100 + plan (verify)

*The easiest possible flip phone for a senior, or a locked-down, safe first phone for a child.*

**Key specs:** IRIS: big buttons, simple menu, M4/T4 hearing-aid rated · IRIS: very low price · Gabb: no internet browser or social media · Gabb: call/text with approved contacts, GPS · Both need a plan from the provider

**Best for:** A senior who just wants to call and text, or a younger child getting their very first phone.

**Where to buy:** [Target \(Consumer Cellular\)](#) · [Gabb \(direct\)](#) · [Amazon](#)

BETTER

Lively Jitterbug Flip3 (senior) / Bark Phone (kids)

Jitterbug Flip3 ~\$79.99 + plan; Bark Phone from ~\$49/mo (verify)

*Jitterbug adds a real urgent-response button; Bark gives parents the strongest monitoring controls. The Flip3 replaced the Flip2 in 2026.*

**Key specs:** Jitterbug: dedicated Urgent Response button · Jitterbug: loud audio, simple list menu, big screen · Bark: industry-leading content monitoring and alerts · Bark: contact and screen-time controls · Both are subscription-based

**Best for:** A senior who wants a safety net, or parents who want deep oversight of a tween's phone.

**Where to buy:** [Best Buy](#) · [Lively \(direct\)](#) · [Bark \(direct\)](#)

**BEST****Lively Jitterbug Smart5 (senior) / Pinwheel or Troomi smartphone (kids)**

**Jitterbug Smart5**  
 ~\$149.99 + plan; kids smartphones  
 ~\$149-\$249 + plan  
 (verify)

*A simplified full smartphone for a senior who wants photos and video calls, or a grow-with-them kids phone that adds apps gradually. The Smart5 replaced the Smart4 in 2026.*

**Key specs:** Jitterbug Smart5: large list-based menu, big battery · Jitterbug Smart5: Urgent Response, voice typing · Kids phones: curated/approved app lists only · Kids phones: location and schedule controls · Both subscription-based

**Best for:** A tech-curious senior, or an older child ready for a smartphone with guardrails.

**Where to buy:** [Best Buy](#) · [Lively \(direct\)](#) · [Troomi \(direct\)](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

A grandparent new to phones, or a child getting their first one

Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

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## Apple Watch

### What to look for:

If the person has an iPhone, an Apple Watch is one of the easiest 'yes' gifts there is — but you don't need to overspend. Three choices: the SE is the affordable one and does the important stuff (notifications, activity, fall detection, calls); the Series is the sweet spot that adds the always-on screen, ECG, and blood-oxygen; and the rugged Ultra is big, bright, and built for serious outdoor use with much longer battery. For most people the mid-tier Series is the right call. The current lineup for holiday 2026 is the Series 12 and Ultra 4 (both launched September 2026), with the SE 3 still around as the budget option — verify it's in stock, as Apple's SE refresh timing has been uneven. Watch out for two things: an Apple Watch only works with an iPhone (never gift one to an Android user), and the 'cellular' versions cost more and need their own monthly line — most people are fine with the cheaper GPS model that uses the phone nearby. Band size and fit matter too; the watch comes in two case sizes.

GOOD

Apple Watch SE (3rd gen)

~\$249 (GPS), ~\$299 (cellular) — verify stock

All the Apple Watch essentials — notifications, fitness, safety features — at the friendliest price.

**Key specs:** Activity tracking, workouts, heart rate · Fall and crash detection, emergency SOS · Notifications, calls, Apple Pay · No ECG or blood-oxygen · Pairs with iPhone only

**Best for:** A first-time Apple Watch wearer or a budget-minded gift.

**Where to buy:** [Apple](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

BETTER

Apple Watch Series 12

~\$399 (GPS), ~\$499 (cellular)

The one most people should buy — adds the always-on display and the full health suite. It replaced the Series 11 in September 2026 at the same price.

**Key specs:** Always-on display, brighter and tougher than before · ECG and blood-oxygen sensors · Full activity + sleep tracking, new Health Sensing System · Fall/crash detection, SOS · S11 chip, faster charging

**Best for:** Anyone who wants the complete modern Apple Watch without the Ultra's bulk or price.

**Where to buy:** [Apple](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

BEST

Apple Watch Ultra 4

~\$799

The rugged, big-screen flagship with the longest battery — built for the outdoors. It replaced the Ultra 3 in September 2026.

**Key specs:** Large bright titanium design · Up to ~50 hr normal use, ~84 hr low-power mode · Always-on, all health sensors, S11 chip · Satellite features, depth/dive features · Cellular included

**Best for:** Hikers, runners, swimmers, and anyone who wants the toughest, longest-lasting Apple Watch.

**Where to buy:** [Apple](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

★ Great gift for:

The iPhone owner who wants to get moving or stay connected

Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

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## Android & fitness smartwatches (Samsung, Google, Garmin)

### What to look for:

For an Android phone owner, the smartwatch question splits three ways. Samsung Galaxy Watch and Google Pixel Watch are the all-rounders — nice screens, apps, notifications, good health tracking — and they pair best with those brands' phones (a Samsung watch is happiest on a Samsung phone). Garmin is the choice for someone who's serious about fitness or the outdoors: the sport tracking and GPS are the best in the business and the battery lasts days to weeks instead of a day, but the everyday 'smart' features are more basic. So the real question is: does the person want a little computer on their wrist (Samsung/Pixel) or a serious training and adventure tool (Garmin)? Check battery life honestly — the slick touchscreen watches generally need daily charging. The current all-rounders for holiday 2026 are the Samsung Galaxy Watch 9 (out August 2026) and the Google Pixel Watch 5 (out August 2026); Garmin's current runner picks are the Forerunner 570 and the flagship Forerunner 970.

#### GOOD

#### Google Pixel Watch 5 (41mm, Wi-Fi) or Samsung Galaxy Watch 9 (base)

~\$349-\$380 (verify)

*A polished, good-looking everyday smartwatch with solid health tracking for Android users. These replaced the Pixel Watch 4 / Galaxy Watch 8 in 2026.*

**Key specs:** Bright round (Pixel) or AMOLED (Samsung) display · Heart rate, sleep, workouts · Notifications, apps, contactless pay · ~24 hr battery (daily charge) · Best paired with matching-brand phone

**Best for:** An Android user who wants an attractive, do-it-all watch.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

#### BETTER

#### Samsung Galaxy Watch 9 Classic or Pixel Watch 5 (45mm, LTE)

~\$400-\$470 (verify)

*The step-up size with LTE and premium feel — the full-featured Android picks for 2026.*

**Key specs:** Larger display, LTE option (own number) · Full health + sleep suite · Rotating bezel (Galaxy Classic) · Daily charging · Deep integration with its phone brand

**Best for:** Someone who wants the larger, premium version and phone-free connectivity.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

BEST

Garmin Forerunner 570 (runners) or Garmin fenix 8 / Forerunner 970 flagship

Forerunner 570 ~\$549.99; Forerunner 970 ~\$749.99; fenix 8 ~\$999 (verify)

Best-in-class GPS and training metrics with multi-day battery — a true fitness tool. The 570/970 replaced the Forerunner 265/965.

**Key specs:** Excellent multi-band GPS and training analysis · Days-to-weeks of battery life · Works with iPhone and Android · Rugged, sport-focused build (fenix adds maps/durability) · Fewer everyday 'smart' apps than Samsung/Pixel

**Best for:** The dedicated runner, cyclist, hiker, or triathlete.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

★ Great gift for:

The Android user or the serious runner/hiker on your list

Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

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## Fitness trackers & smart rings

### What to look for:

These are for people who want to track activity, sleep, and health without a full smartwatch on their wrist. A fitness band (like a Fitbit) is the familiar, affordable choice — small screen, step and heart tracking, days of battery, and simple to read. A smart ring (Oura, Samsung Galaxy Ring) is the newer, more discreet option: nothing on your wrist, excellent sleep and recovery tracking, but no screen and you read everything in the phone app. Two big gotchas to know before you buy: first, subscriptions — Oura charges about \$6/month on top of the ring to unlock the full insights, while Samsung's ring and most Fitbit features don't. Second, rings have no display and must be sized (order a sizing kit first), and the Galaxy Ring really only shines with a Samsung phone. For a gift, a Fitbit is the safe crowd-pleaser; a ring is the 'wow' gift for someone into sleep and wellness. The newest ring is the Oura Ring 5 (out June 2026), which is far slimmer than the Ring 4 and adds overnight blood-pressure sensing.

**GOOD**

## Fitbit Charge 6

~\$159.95 (verify)

*The classic easy-to-use fitness band — accurate tracking, days of battery, no fuss. Still the go-to band in 2026.*

**Key specs:** Heart rate, steps, sleep, 40+ exercise modes · Built-in GPS · ~7-day battery · Works with iPhone and Android · Small color touchscreen (Fitbit Premium optional)

**Best for:** Someone who wants simple, reliable activity and sleep tracking on a budget.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER**

## Samsung Galaxy Ring

~\$399.99 (no subscription)

*A discreet, screen-free tracker with strong sleep insights and no monthly fee. (A Galaxy Ring 2 is rumored but not yet released, so this is the current model.)*

**Key specs:** Excellent sleep and activity tracking · No subscription required · ~up to 7-day battery · Multiple ring sizes (order sizing kit) · Best with a Samsung/Android phone

**Best for:** An Android/Samsung user who wants wellness tracking without a watch or a monthly bill.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Samsung](#)

**BEST**

## Oura Ring 5

~\$399 (Silver/Black),  
~\$499 premium  
finishes; charging  
case ~\$99; +\$5.99/mo  
membership

*The most-praised smart ring, newly redesigned — the best sleep and recovery tracking you can wear, now 40% slimmer than the Ring 4 with new blood-pressure sensing.*

**Key specs:** Top-rated sleep, readiness, and HRV tracking; 50+ metrics · Overnight blood-pressure signal monitoring (new) · Works with iPhone and Android · ~up to 9-day battery, IP68, titanium, sizes 6-13 · Requires paid membership for full insights

**Best for:** The wellness and sleep enthusiast who wants the best, and won't mind the subscription.

**Where to buy:** [Oura](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

### ★ Great gift for:

The sleep-and-wellness tracker who doesn't want a watch

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Oura Ring 5 announced](#)
- 
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# Wireless earbuds

## What to look for:

The single most important thing with earbuds is what phone the person has. AirPods are the obvious, delightful choice for an iPhone owner — they pair instantly and just work. For an Android or Samsung user, the matching Galaxy Buds or Pixel Buds give that same seamless magic, while AirPods lose their best features. After that, decide whether you're paying for active noise cancellation (great for flights, commutes, offices — worth it) or keeping it simple. Fit matters more than specs: the sealed 'tip' style blocks more noise and sounds fuller, while the open AirPods-style buds are more comfortable for some but leak sound. Good news for gift-givers: you don't have to spend \$250 — there are genuinely excellent sub-\$100 buds now. Check that the case charges over USB-C (everything does now) and whether wireless charging matters to them.

GOOD

EarFun Air Pro 4+ or CMF Buds 2 Plus (budget) / Apple AirPods 4

EarFun ~\$80-\$100; CMF ~\$49; AirPods 4 ~\$129-\$179 (verify)

Surprisingly great noise cancelling for well under \$100, or entry AirPods for iPhone users.

**Key specs:** Active noise cancellation (EarFun/AirPods 4 ANC version) · USB-C charging case · Solid battery life · AirPods 4: instant iPhone pairing · Great value for the money

**Best for:** Anyone who wants good buds without overspending (pick AirPods 4 for an iPhone owner).

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

BETTER

Google Pixel Buds Pro 2 (Android) / Apple AirPods 4 with ANC (iPhone)

Pixel Buds Pro 2 ~\$229; AirPods 4 ANC ~\$179 (verify)

The mid-tier sweet spot — strong noise cancelling and seamless pairing with the right phone. (Pixel Buds Pro 2 is still current; Google skipped a Pro 3 in 2026.)

**Key specs:** Active noise cancellation · Great sound and call quality · Seamless pairing (Pixel/Android or iPhone) · Wireless charging case · Good battery + fast charge

**Best for:** Someone who wants premium features matched to their phone's ecosystem.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

## BEST

**Apple AirPods Pro 3 (iPhone) / Samsung  
Galaxy Buds 4 Pro (Samsung) / Sony  
WF-1000XM6 (any)**

**AirPods Pro 3 ~\$249;  
Galaxy Buds 4 Pro  
~\$249.99; Sony  
WF-1000XM6 ~\$329.99**

*The top earbuds for each ecosystem — class-leading noise cancelling and sound. The Sony WF-1000XM6 is the most-cited 'best overall' pick for 2026.*

**Key specs:** Best-in-class active noise cancellation · Excellent sound and call clarity · Seamless pairing with matching phone · Wireless charging, sweat resistance · Sony = best sound on any phone

**Best for:** The person who wants the best earbuds for their phone (match the brand to the phone).

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

★ **Great gift for:**

The commuter, traveler, or music lover (match brand to their phone)

Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

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## Over-ear / noise-cancelling headphones

### What to look for:

Full-size headphones are the gift for someone who wants the best sound and the deepest quiet — on planes, in open offices, or just to disappear into music. The two names that matter are Sony and Bose, and they trade blows: Sony's flagship generally wins on sheer noise cancelling, battery, and app tuning and folds up smaller for travel, while Bose is often the comfort champion with roomier earcups and the best passive isolation. Both are superb; it partly comes down to fit and taste. Think about use: for flights and commuting, prioritize noise cancelling and a foldable travel case; for long listening sessions, prioritize comfort and battery life (these last 24-37 hours). One honest note — these are a real splurge at \$400+, but there are excellent step-down options, and Apple's AirPods Max suit someone fully in the Apple world. Make sure they prefer over-ear; some people just want earbuds.

GOOD

### Sennheiser Accentum or Sony WH-CH720N (step-down ANC)

~\$120-\$180 (verify)

*Real noise cancelling and great sound at a third of flagship prices.*

**Key specs:** Active noise cancellation · Comfortable over-ear fit · Long battery life · Bluetooth multipoint on many models · USB-C charging

**Best for:** Someone who wants quality headphones without the top-tier price.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

BETTER

### Bose QuietComfort Ultra Headphones (2nd Gen)

~\$379-\$449 (verify)

*The comfort and travel pick — plush earcups, the best passive isolation, and superb noise cancelling. Still Bose's current flagship over-ears.*

**Key specs:** Class-leading comfort · Excellent active noise cancellation, CustomTune · Immersive spatial audio mode, USB-C digital audio · ~24-27 hr battery · Great for long flights

**Best for:** Frequent flyers and anyone who wears headphones for hours.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

BEST

### Sony WH-1000XM6

~\$379-\$449 (launched \$449)

*The consensus best overall — top noise cancelling, great tunable sound, longest battery, and folds for travel. Still Sony's current flagship.*

**Key specs:** Best-in-class noise cancelling (QN3 processor, 12 mics) · Excellent, tunable sound with LDAC · Folds into a compact travel case · ~30-37 hr battery · Works with iPhone and Android

**Best for:** The traveler or audiophile who wants the best all-rounder.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

#### ★ Great gift for:

The frequent flyer or someone craving some quiet

Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

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## Phone accessories (chargers, power banks, MagSafe, cases)

### What to look for:

Accessories are the easy, affordable gift that people actually use every day. For charging, the useful upgrades are a fast USB-C wall charger (most phones no longer come with one in the box) and a good power bank for travel and long days. For an iPhone, 'MagSafe' (and the newer Qi2 standard on Android) magnetically snaps a battery or charger right onto the back — very convenient. When buying a power bank, look at capacity (10,000mAh is the sweet spot — roughly 1.5-2 full phone charges — while 20,000mAh is for heavy travel), the wattage (20W+ for real fast charging), and whether it has a built-in cable or kickstand. Stick to reputable brands like Anker, Belkin, or the phone maker's own; no-name batteries aren't worth the risk. For cases, match the exact phone model and favor a known protective brand (OtterBox, Spigen) if they're hard on phones.

#### GOOD

#### Anker USB-C fast wall charger + braided cable (and a sturdy case)

~\$20-\$40

*The thing almost everyone needs and no phone includes anymore — fast, compact, reliable.*

**Key specs:** 30W+ USB-C fast charging · Compact, foldable plug · Charges phones and many tablets/laptops · Durable braided cable · Trusted brand

**Best for:** Anyone — a universally useful stocking stuffer.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

#### BETTER

#### Anker MagGo Power Bank (10K, Qi2/MagSafe)

~\$60-\$90 (verify)

*Snaps magnetically onto the back of a phone for cord-free top-ups — about 1.5-2 charges.*

**Key specs:** 10,000mAh capacity · Qi2/MagSafe magnetic wireless charging · 27-30W USB-C wired port · Fold-out kickstand · ~1.8 iPhone charges

**Best for:** The iPhone (or Qi2 Android) owner who's always running low by evening.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Anker charging bundle — high-capacity power bank + multi-port GaN charger + MagSafe stand****~\$100-\$150 (verify)**

*A complete 'never run out of power' kit for the heavy traveler or multi-device household.*

**Key specs:** 20,000mAh travel power bank · Multi-port GaN wall charger (phone + laptop) · MagSafe/Qi2 bedside or desk stand · Fast charging across devices · All trusted-brand gear

**Best for:** The frequent traveler or gadget lover with lots to keep charged.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Anyone with a phone — the practical gift that gets used daily

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- 
- [Best power banks 2026](#)
- [Best USB-C wall chargers 2026](#)

## E-readers (Kindle & Kobo)

### What to look for:

An e-reader is a wonderful gift for a book lover — easy on the eyes, holds thousands of books, and the battery lasts weeks. The real decision is the bookstore, not the gadget: a Kindle locks you into Amazon's store (and Kindle Unlimited and Audible, which many people already use), while a Kobo supports the open EPUB format and makes borrowing free books from your public library much easier. So ask what the person already uses. After that: get the waterproof model if they read in the bath or at the pool, consider a warm front-light for bedtime reading, and decide whether color is worth it — the new color e-ink is lovely for comics, cookbooks, and kids' books but looks muted and soft, not iPad-bright, and costs more. For most people a basic Kindle Paperwhite or Kobo Clara is plenty. Skip color unless they specifically want it. (Note: Amazon doesn't stock Kobo — buy Kobo at Best Buy, Walmart, or Kobo direct.)

**GOOD**

**Amazon Kindle (base) or Kobo Clara BW**

~\$109-\$139 (verify)

*A light, affordable e-reader that nails the basics — crisp text and weeks of battery.*

**Key specs:** 6-inch 300ppi crisp E Ink screen · Adjustable front light · USB-C, weeks of battery · Thousands of books in your pocket · Kindle = Amazon store; Kobo = EPUB/library

**Best for:** A casual reader or anyone new to e-readers.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER**

**Amazon Kindle Paperwhite (latest, 12th gen)**

~\$159.99 (Signature Edition ~\$199.99; verify)

*The e-reader most people should buy — bigger screen, waterproof, warm light, fast.*

**Key specs:** 7-inch 300ppi screen · Adjustable warm light · IPX8 waterproof · 16GB storage, USB-C, ~12-week battery · Smooth Audible pairing

**Best for:** The book lover already in Amazon's ecosystem.

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST**

**Kobo Libra Colour (color, library-friendly) or Kindle Colorsoft Signature Edition (color Kindle)**

Kobo Libra Colour ~\$219.99; Kindle Colorsoft ~\$279.99 (verify)

*Color e-ink plus a premium reading experience — Kobo adds easy library borrowing and EPUB support plus page-turn buttons.*

**Key specs:** 7-inch color E Ink (Kaleido 3) display · Physical page-turn buttons (Kobo Libra) · Waterproof, warm light · Kobo: EPUB + easy library loans; Kindle: Amazon store · Great for comics, covers, kids' books

**Best for:** The avid reader who wants color and/or easy public-library borrowing.

**Where to buy:** [Best Buy](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Walmart](#)

★ **Great gift for:**

The book lover who reads every night

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- 
- 
- [Best ereaders in 2026, tested](#)

## Kids' headphones (volume-limited)

### What to look for:

Look for a real volume cap — 85 dB is the common safe ceiling for children, and some pairs add a 94 dB “study mode” for noisy places. Over-ear pairs sized for small heads, with bendable, durable headbands, hold up best. Wired pairs never need charging and work on any device; Bluetooth pairs are tidier but need a charge. A detachable boom mic helps for school video calls. Skip no-name pairs that claim a limit but don't actually enforce one.

#### GOOD

#### JLab JBuddies Studio 2 (wireless + wired)

\$25 (verify — often \$20–\$30)

*An inexpensive, genuinely volume-limited pair that works wired or over Bluetooth, and folds flat for a backpack.*

**Key specs:** 85 dB volume limit · Bluetooth + included wired cable · Folding, kid-sized fit · ~22 hr Bluetooth battery · Built-in mic

**Best for:** Everyday school and tablet use where you want a charge-optional backup

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

#### BETTER

#### ONANOFF BuddyPhones School+ (wired)

\$30 (verify)

*A tough, wired pair with a detachable boom mic — a favorite for classrooms and video lessons, with no battery to die.*

**Key specs:** 85 dB safe volume limit · Wired (no charging needed) · Detachable boom microphone · Foldable, BPA-free build · Audio splitter for sharing

**Best for:** School and remote-learning video calls

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Target](#)

#### BEST

#### Puro Sound Labs PuroQuiet Plus (wireless, noise-cancelling)

\$80 (verify)

*The upgrade pick: active noise cancellation with a studio-grade 85 dB limit, so kids don't crank the volume to drown out noise.*

**Key specs:** 85 dB volume limit · Active noise cancelling · Bluetooth, ~27 hr battery · Balanced, non-harsh tuning · Sturdy aluminum headband

**Best for:** Travel and loud environments where kids tend to turn it up

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Kids and younger grandchildren for school tablets, learning apps, and quiet-the-car road trips.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Tech Advisor](#)
- [Headphones Addict](#)



# Section C

## TV & Entertainment

11 gift categories · Good · Better · Best

BillsHomeTech.com · (330) 200-8042

## TVs (4K / OLED / Mini-LED)

### What to look for:

Start with the room, not the spec sheet. In a bright living room with lots of windows, a Mini-LED (sometimes labeled QLED) set gets much brighter and fights glare better. In a darker room where you watch movies at night, OLED gives you the deepest blacks and the best picture most people will ever notice. Size matters more than you'd think — for most living rooms a 65-inch is the sweet spot, and bigger is usually better than a slightly nicer picture at a smaller size. Ignore made-up contrast numbers in ads; the things that actually matter are panel type (OLED vs Mini-LED), peak brightness, and the built-in smart system you'll stare at every day. Gotchas: 'OLED' can scare people with talk of burn-in, but for normal TV and movie watching it's a non-issue after years of use. Watch out for cheap '4K' sets with weak brightness and bad upscaling — a bargain TV can look worse than your old one. And you almost never need the expensive HDMI cables the store pushes at checkout. TV model lines refresh every year, so make sure you're buying the current generation (2026) rather than leftover stock unless the older set is deeply discounted.

GOOD

TCL QM6L (65")

\$600-\$800 (verify (check current price); new 2026 model, rolling out — the prior QM6K may still be sold cheaper while stock lasts)

*TCL's 2026 budget Mini-LED, the direct successor to the popular QM6K — a big, bright QLED picture for the price of a basic TV, the easy value pick for a main living-room set.*

**Key specs:** QD-Mini LED backlight · 4K, high-refresh gaming support · Google TV built in · Good brightness for daytime rooms · New 50" size added; also up to 98"

**Best for:** The family that wants a large, bright, modern TV without overthinking it

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

## BETTER

## LG C6 OLED (65")

**\$1,400-\$1,800 (verify  
(check current price);  
frequently discounted,  
55" cheaper)**

*LG's 2026 C-series — the OLED most reviewers reach for, with stunning dark-room picture, a long track record and a price that's sane on sale. RTINGS scored it 8.7/10.*

**Key specs:** OLED evo panel, perfect blacks · 4K, four HDMI 2.1 ports, up to 165Hz gaming · ~1,350-nit HDR peak · webOS smart system · Sizes 42"-83" (77"/83" are the C6H variant)

**Best for:** Movie and sports lovers with a normal-to-dim room who want a clear step up

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

## BEST

## Samsung S95H OLED (65")

**\$2,500-\$3,000 (verify  
(check current price);  
65", sale prices lower)**

*RTINGS' top-rated 4K TV of 2026 — a QD-OLED that's about as good as a TV picture gets right now.*

**Key specs:** QD-OLED panel, extra-bright for an OLED · 4K, 165Hz, four HDMI 2.1 · Anti-glare screen, great in brighter rooms too · Tizen smart system · Sizes 55"-83"

**Best for:** The person who wants the reference-quality picture and will keep the TV for years

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Samsung](#) · [Walmart](#)

## ★ Great gift for:

Great gift for the family upgrading the living-room centerpiece, or a movie buff finally going OLED.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [RTINGS](#) — 8.7/10
- [RTINGS](#) — Top-rated OLED of 2026
- [RTINGS](#) — Category guide
- [Tom's Guide](#) — Buying guide

# Streaming Devices (Roku, Fire TV, Apple TV, Google TV)

## What to look for:

The honest truth: almost any current streaming stick will play Netflix and the rest just fine. What really decides it is which 'world' the person already lives in. Apple household (iPhone, iCloud photos) → Apple TV 4K is the fastest and cleanest, with the fewest ads. Amazon/Alexa household → Fire TV. Google/Android household → Google TV Streamer, which also doubles as a smart-home hub. Roku is the neutral, dead-simple choice that doesn't push you toward any one company. Pay attention to whether it's 4K (match it to a 4K TV), whether it has an Ethernet port if the Wi-Fi is weak, and how cluttered the home screen is with ads. Gotchas: the cheap sticks make their money by filling your home screen with ads and 'suggestions' — Apple TV is the main one that mostly avoids this, which is part of what you pay for. Also, if the TV is more than a few years old, a new streamer is a genuinely cheap way to make it feel new again.

**GOOD**

### Roku Streaming Stick Plus (2025)

**\$40-\$50 (verify (check current price); frequent sale pricing, often ~\$35)**

*Roku's current 4K stick (it replaced the older Streaming Stick 4K in Roku's 2025 refresh) — the no-fuss, no-allegiance pick with a simple remote that works with every service.*

**Key specs:** 4K HDR10+ streaming · Simple, neutral Roku interface · Compact — plugs into HDMI, hides behind the TV · Voice remote · Works with any TV brand

**Best for:** Anyone who just wants streaming to work without picking sides

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER**

### Amazon Fire TV Stick 4K Max (2nd Gen)

**\$50-\$60 list (verify (check current price); often ~\$35-\$40 on sale)**

*The most powerful stick for Alexa homes — fast, 4K, Wi-Fi 6E, and controls your smart-home gear by voice.*

**Key specs:** 4K HDR, Wi-Fi 6E · Deep Alexa and Amazon integration · Ambient 'art' screensaver mode · Fast, responsive menus · Shows more ads than Apple TV

**Best for:** Alexa and Amazon Prime households

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Apple TV 4K (4th gen, 2026)**

**\$179-\$299 (verify  
(check current price)  
at Apple; new 4th-gen  
announced Oct 2026,  
shipping  
mid-November —  
leftover 2022 3rd-gen  
stock may be cheaper)**

*The fastest, cleanest, nearly ad-free streamer — the premium pick, especially for iPhone families. The 2026 model adds a faster A19 chip, hands-free Siri and Wi-Fi 7.*

**Key specs:** 4K Dolby Vision / HDR10+ / Atmos · A19 chip, hands-free 'Hey Siri' with far-field mics · Wi-Fi 7, built-in Ethernet · Virtually no home-screen ads · Syncs with iCloud Photos, Apple Music, Fitness+

**Best for:** Apple households, and anyone who hates a cluttered, ad-filled TV screen

**Where to buy:** [Apple](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for a parent with an older 'dumb' TV, or anyone tired of a slow, ad-choked home screen.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Tom's Guide](#) — Editor's Choice
- [Stuff](#) — Buying guide

## Soundbars

### What to look for:

This is the single best-value upgrade for most TVs — modern flat TVs sound thin and tinny, and even a cheap soundbar fixes dialogue you can't quite make out. Decide how far you want to go. A simple single bar (sometimes with a small subwoofer) is a huge jump and all many people need. A bar that includes a separate subwoofer and rear speakers gets you true surround sound and the deep rumble for movies. 'Dolby Atmos' means it bounces sound off the ceiling for a more immersive feel — nice, but not essential. Look for an HDMI eARC port (lets one cable carry the best sound and control volume with your TV remote). Gotchas: the all-in-one bar-plus-sub-plus-rears kits are the sweet spot for home theater without running wires everywhere. Sonos sounds superb and is easy to use but locks you into their app and doesn't pass video through. And a huge, expensive bar in a small apartment is overkill — match the size to the room.

**GOOD****Sony HT-S100F (or similar sub-\$130 single bar)****\$100-\$130 (verify (check current price))**

*A clean, simple single bar that instantly makes dialogue clearer — the easiest TV-sound fix there is.*

**Key specs:** Compact single bar, no subwoofer to place · Clear dialogue vs built-in TV speakers · Bluetooth for music · Simple hookup (HDMI/optical) · Fits small rooms and bedrooms

**Best for:** Anyone who just wants to understand the dialogue and hear the TV better

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****Samsung HW-Q990H (11.1.4 with sub + rears)****\$1,300-\$1,800 (verify (check current price); 2026 model, heavily discounted at holidays — prior HW-Q990F often cheaper)**

*Samsung's 2026 flagship surround kit in one box — bar, wireless subwoofer and rear speakers for real home-theater sound, now with up to 11.1.4 channels.*

**Key specs:** True Dolby Atmos surround, bar + sub + 2 rears (11.1.4) · Deep bass from dedicated wireless subwoofer · New 'Sound Elevation' dialogue feature · Great with Samsung TVs via Q-Symphony (also works with any) · Multiple HDMI inputs

**Best for:** Families who want movie-night surround sound without a receiver and wiring

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Samsung](#)

**BEST****Sonos Arc Ultra****\$1,000-\$1,100 (verify (check current price); add sub/rears for full surround)**

*The consensus best-sounding premium bar — superb sound and the easiest app/multi-room experience.*

**Key specs:** Flagship Dolby Atmos single bar · Expandable with Sonos Sub and Era rears · Multi-room music across the house · Bluetooth plus Wi-Fi streaming · No HDMI video passthrough

**Best for:** The person who wants premium sound and may build a whole-home Sonos system

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#) · [Sonos](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for anyone who says 'I can't hear what they're saying' during every movie.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [What Hi-Fi?](#) — Flagship Atmos pick
- [RTINGS](#) — Top premium bar

• [Tom's Guide](#) — Buying guide

# Home Theater — AV Receivers & Speakers

## What to look for:

This is the serious route: a receiver (the 'brain' that powers speakers and switches your devices) plus real speakers. It sounds dramatically better than any soundbar, but it takes space, wiring, and some willingness to set it up. The key numbers: channels (7.2 or 9.2 means more surround/overhead speakers), and whether it has the newer HDMI 2.1 ports for 4K/120Hz gaming consoles. The feature that matters most is room correction (Audyssey on Denon/Marantz, YPAO on Yamaha) — it listens with a microphone and tunes the sound to your room automatically. Gotchas: don't overbuy channels you'll never use — most people are fine with 7.2. Buy the receiver and speakers together so the power matches. And a receiver is a 'project' gift — great for someone who enjoys the tinkering, frustrating for someone who just wants to press play. Receivers refresh on a slow (roughly two-year) cycle, so the models below are the current mainstream picks; a Denon successor to the X3800H was rumored in 2026, so verify before buying at full price.

GOOD

### Denon AVR-S770H (7.2 receiver)

\$550-\$650 (verify (check current price))

*The value entry point into real home theater — full modern features and Audyssey room tuning, nothing missing.*

**Key specs:** 7.2 channels, 8K/4K-120 HDMI · Audyssey room correction included · Dolby Atmos / DTS:X · HEOS wireless multi-room · Great first receiver

**Best for:** Someone building their first proper surround system

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Crutchfield](#)

BETTER

### Denon AVR-X3800H (9.4 receiver)

\$1,300-\$1,700 (verify (check current price); a successor was rumored in 2026 — confirm it's still the current model or buy on discount)

*A do-everything receiver with the best room correction and room to grow into a bigger setup.*

**Key specs:** 9.4 channels, HDMI 2.1 on all ports · Audyssey XT32 — top-tier room tuning · Handles taller Atmos speaker layouts · Plenty of power for large rooms · Future-proof connectivity

**Best for:** The enthusiast who wants one receiver to last many years

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Crutchfield](#)

**BEST****Marantz Cinema 30 (flagship receiver)****~\$4,800 (verify (check current price))**

*A reference-grade flagship — superb build and sound for a true high-end home theater.*

**Key specs:** Flagship processing and amplification · Audyssey XT32, Dirac-ready · Premium build and musical sound · Full 8K/4K-120 HDMI · For dedicated theater rooms

**Best for:** The serious hobbyist building a dedicated home cinema

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Crutchfield](#) · [Audio Advice](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for the hands-on hobbyist who loves dialing in the perfect sound (pair with bookshelf speakers like ELAC Debut or Klipsch).

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Crutchfield](#) — Buying guide
- [Audioholics](#) — Buying guide

## Smart Speakers & Smart Displays (Alexa, Google, HomePod)

### What to look for:

Two different things here. A smart speaker is voice-only (ask questions, set timers, play music, control lights). A smart display adds a screen — great in a kitchen for recipes and video calls, or on a nightstand as a smart clock and photo frame. Pick the voice assistant that matches the household's phones and gear: Alexa (Amazon) has the most compatible smart-home devices, Google Assistant answers general questions best, and Apple's HomePod is for iPhone families who care about music quality. Think about the room: small speaker for a bedroom, a display for the kitchen, a better-sounding speaker for a living room. Gotchas: these are always-listening microphones, which some people dislike — worth knowing before you gift one to a privacy-minded relative. Sound quality on the little pucks is fine for talk and background music but not for serious listening. And the cheapest ones go on deep sale constantly around the holidays, so never pay full price. Note: Amazon's 2025 lineup moved to 'Alexa+' (its AI assistant) and added the premium Echo Dot Max; Apple refreshed its speakers in October 2026 with a new HomePod mini 2.

## GOOD

## Amazon Echo Dot (5th Gen)

**\$40-\$50 (verify (check current price); often ~\$25 on sale)**

*The default starter smart speaker — cheap, capable and the gateway to controlling lights and timers by voice. (If you want the newest compact, the 2025 Echo Dot Max adds the faster AZ3 chip and full Alexa+ for around \$100.)*

**Key specs:** Compact Alexa speaker · Surprisingly full sound for the size · Controls Alexa smart-home gear · Doubles as a nightstand clock (clock version) · Constant holiday discounts

**Best for:** First-timers and anyone adding Alexa to another room

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

## BETTER

## Amazon Echo Show 8 (latest gen)

**\$150 (verify (check current price); frequently on sale, often ~\$90-\$110)**

*The smart display most people are happiest with — perfect kitchen size for recipes, video calls and photos, now on the Alexa+ generation with an 8.7-inch display.*

**Key specs:** 8.7-inch HD touchscreen · Video calling with camera · Alexa+ ready · Doubles as a digital photo frame · Controls and views smart-home cameras

**Best for:** Kitchens, home offices, and staying in touch with family by video

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

## BEST

## Apple HomePod (2nd Gen)

**\$299 (verify (check current price))**

*The best-sounding mainstream smart speaker and a natural fit for iPhone homes. (For a smaller budget, Apple's new HomePod mini 2 landed in October 2026.)*

**Key specs:** Rich, room-filling audio · Works with Siri and Apple Music · Pairs in stereo / as Apple TV speakers · Also a HomeKit / Matter smart-home hub · Apple ecosystem only

**Best for:** iPhone households that want real music quality from a smart speaker

**Where to buy:** [Apple](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

## ★ Great gift for:

Great gift for a parent in the kitchen, a grandparent for easy video calls, or anyone starting a smart home.

## Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

- [Tom's Guide](#) — Buying guide
- [Smart Home Perfected](#) — Top pick

# Projectors

## What to look for:

A projector gives you a giant 100-inch-plus image for far less than a TV that size — but light is everything. Brightness is measured in lumens (ANSI/ISO lumens is the honest number); more lumens means it holds up in rooms that aren't pitch dark. For a true movie-night image you still want to dim the lights. Decide the type: a small portable projector is fun and flexible (backyard movies, dorm rooms); a dedicated home-theater projector gives a far better picture in a dark room; and an ultra-short-throw (UST) sits inches from the wall but costs much more. Check native resolution (real 4K vs pixel-shifted vs 1080p) and whether it has a decent built-in streaming system and speaker, or needs a separate device. Gotchas: ignore the inflated 'lumens' numbers on no-name Amazon projectors — they're often a fraction of what's claimed. Portable projectors are great fun but are not a TV replacement for daytime watching. And you'll want a plain light-colored wall or a cheap screen.

GOOD

XGIMI MoGo 4 (portable)

\$400-\$500 (verify (check current price))

*A genuinely good little portable — easy to move room to room or outside, with streaming built in. (XGIMI also sells a brighter MoGo 4 Laser variant.)*

**Key specs:** Compact, battery-capable portable · Built-in Google TV streaming · Auto focus and keystone · 1080p-class image, ~450 ISO lumens · Good for casual and outdoor movie nights

**Best for:** Backyard movies, dorms, and casual big-screen fun

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

BETTER

JMGO N1S 4K

\$900-\$1,300 (verify (check current price))

*RTINGS' best-value pick — a sharp pixel-shifted 4K image and a flexible gimbal stand you can aim anywhere.*

**Key specs:** 4K (pixel-shift) image · Bright enough for dim living rooms · Built-in gimbal stand for easy setup · Smart streaming built in · Great picture per dollar

**Best for:** A big, sharp home-theater image without a dedicated theater room

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

**BEST****Epson Home Cinema LS11000 (home theater)****\$4,000-\$4,500 (verify (check current price))**

*A reference-grade dedicated home-theater projector for a true dark-room cinema.*

**Key specs:** Laser light source, 4K PRO-UHD · Excellent color and brightness · For a dedicated, light-controlled room · Long-life laser (no bulb swaps) · Pair with a proper screen

**Best for:** The enthusiast building a real home cinema room

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Crutchfield](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for the family that loves movie nights, or the host who throws backyard watch parties.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [RTINGS](#) — Portable pick
- [RTINGS](#) — Buying guide
- [Crutchfield](#) — Buying guide

## Gaming Consoles (PlayStation, Xbox, Switch)

### What to look for:

Pick the console around who's playing and what they want to play. Nintendo Switch 2 is the family-and-kids champion and the only one you can also play handheld on the go — Mario, Zelda, Pokemon live here. PlayStation 5 has the strongest lineup of big single-player blockbusters and is the mainstream pick for most adult gamers. Xbox Series X is powerful and shines with Game Pass (a Netflix-style subscription for games). Decide between disc and digital-only editions — digital is cheaper up front but you can't buy used games or lend discs. Check what friends and family already own, because online play happens within each platform. Gotchas: console prices rose across the board in 2026 — verify the current price before you buy, they've been moving. Factor in the real cost: an extra controller, a game or two, and an online subscription add up fast. And demand spikes at the holidays, so popular bundles sell out.

**GOOD****Nintendo Switch 2**

~\$500 (verify (check current price); rose from \$449.99 to \$499.99 on Sept 1, 2026)

*The family pick — play on the TV or grab it and go, with Nintendo's exclusive games the whole house enjoys.*

**Key specs:** Plays docked on TV or as a handheld · Nintendo exclusives (Mario, Zelda, Pokemon) · Great for kids and couch multiplayer · Backward compatible with many Switch games · Most affordable of the three

**Best for:** Families, kids, and anyone who wants to game on the go

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****PlayStation 5 (Standard)**

~\$650 (verify (check current price); raised to \$649.99 on Apr 2, 2026; Digital Edition \$599.99)

*The mainstream choice for grown-up gaming — the best catalog of big single-player blockbusters.*

**Key specs:** 4K gaming, fast SSD loading · Strong exclusive game lineup · Disc and cheaper digital-only editions · Excellent DualSense controller · Huge game library

**Best for:** The teen or adult gamer who wants the biggest blockbuster games

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****PlayStation 5 Pro**

~\$900 (verify (check current price); raised to \$899.99 on Apr 2, 2026)

*The most powerful mainstream console — sharper, smoother visuals for the gamer who wants the best.*

**Key specs:** Upgraded GPU for higher-fidelity gaming · Best-looking console experience · Same huge PS5 game library · Disc drive sold separately · Premium price — verify current

**Best for:** The dedicated gamer with a high-end 4K TV who wants top performance

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for the whole family (Switch 2) or the serious gamer on your list (PlayStation).

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Wikipedia](#) — Reference
- [Push Square / Sony](#) — News — verify price

## Handheld Gaming PCs (Steam Deck, ROG Ally, etc.)

### What to look for:

These are full PCs shrunk into a Nintendo-Switch-style handheld — they play the huge library of PC games (Steam, etc.) anywhere in the house. This is an enthusiast gift, not a casual one. The big fork in the road: SteamOS machines (Steam Deck, and some Legion Go S models) are simpler, smoother, and more console-like, while Windows handhelds (ROG Xbox Ally, MSI Claw) are more flexible and can run anything but need more fiddling. Watch the screen (OLED is a lovely upgrade), battery life (demanding games drain these fast), and storage (games are huge — get 512GB or more). Gotchas: prices jumped in 2026 — the Steam Deck OLED is no longer the cheap option it once was, so compare current prices carefully. The person really needs to already be into PC gaming and a little tech-comfortable; this is not a plug-and-play gift for a non-gamer. And budget for a case and maybe a microSD card.

GOOD

### Lenovo Legion Go S (SteamOS version)

\$600-\$830 (verify (check current price); wide range by config)

*The current price-to-performance favorite — a big, nice screen and the simpler SteamOS experience.*

**Key specs:** 8-inch 1200p display · Up to 32GB RAM · SteamOS — console-like simplicity · Strong value vs rivals · Good build quality

**Best for:** The PC gamer who wants the best value and a simple setup

**Where to buy:** [Best Buy](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Lenovo](#)

BETTER

### Valve Steam Deck OLED (512GB)

~\$789 (verify (check current price); rose from \$549 in 2026; 1TB version ~\$949)

*Still the smoothest, best-supported handheld — gorgeous OLED screen and the most polished SteamOS experience.*

**Key specs:** 7.4-inch OLED screen · 512GB storage (1TB version ~\$949) · SteamOS, huge verified-game library · Great community and support · Excellent ergonomics

**Best for:** The Steam gamer who wants the most refined, hassle-free handheld

**Where to buy:** [Steam \(Valve\)](#) · [Amazon](#)

BEST

## ASUS ROG Xbox Ally X

~\$1,000 (verify (check current price); \$999.99 at launch, configs vary)

*The most powerful mainstream Windows handheld — runs anything, with the strongest performance of the group.*

**Key specs:** Top-tier handheld performance · Windows — runs any PC game or store · Xbox app and Game Pass friendly · Large battery · Needs more setup than SteamOS

**Best for:** The power user who wants maximum performance and Windows flexibility

**Where to buy:** [Best Buy](#) · [Amazon](#) · [ASUS](#)

★ **Great gift for:**

Great gift for the PC gamer who wants to play their Steam library on the couch or on a trip.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [PCGamesN](#) — Buying guide
- [Tom's Hardware](#) — Buying guide
- [Engadget](#) — Buying guide

## Turntables & Hi-Fi / Vinyl

### What to look for:

A turntable is a wonderful gift, but match it to how serious the person is — and protect their records. The single most important rule: avoid the cute all-in-one 'suitcase' players (Crosley-style) for anyone who cares about their vinyl, because their cheap needles and heavy tracking can wear records out. A good beginner deck has a proper cartridge and, ideally, a built-in phono preamp so it plugs straight into powered speakers or a receiver. Decide: does the giftee want fully automatic (press a button, the arm lifts itself — safest and easiest) or manual (part of the hobby)? Check whether it has a built-in preamp (needed unless their amp/speakers already have a phono input) and whether the cartridge is upgradeable. Gotchas: they'll also need something to play through — powered speakers or a receiver — so a turntable alone may not make sound out of the box. Bluetooth models exist but purists skip them. And a better cartridge down the road is a cheap, meaningful upgrade.

**GOOD****Audio-Technica AT-LP60X****\$130-\$180 (verify  
(check current price))**

*The safe, simple first turntable — fully automatic and gentle on records, from a brand that knows vinyl.*

**Key specs:** Fully automatic (arm lifts itself) · Built-in switchable phono preamp · Belt drive, replaceable needle · Easy, foolproof setup · Won't chew up records like suitcase players

**Best for:** A beginner or returning-to-vinyl listener who wants no fuss

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****Audio-Technica AT-LP70X****\$250-\$300 (verify  
(check current price))**

*The default 'first real turntable' — automatic convenience plus the upgradeable VM95 cartridge enthusiasts respect.*

**Key specs:** Automatic playback · Built-in phono preamp · Upgradeable VM95 cartridge platform · Better tonearm and build than entry decks · Clear step up in sound

**Best for:** Someone getting a bit serious who still wants push-button ease

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Crutchfield](#)

**BEST****Fluance RT85****\$500-\$600 (verify  
(check current price))**

*Reference-grade components without four-figure prices — the enthusiast value pick for real sound quality.*

**Key specs:** Ortofon 2M Blue cartridge · Acrylic platter, speed control · Manual belt-drive audiophile deck · Needs a separate preamp/receiver · Big step up in fidelity

**Best for:** The serious listener who wants audiophile sound for the money

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Fluance](#) · [Crutchfield](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for the music lover rebuilding a vinyl collection — pair with powered speakers if they don't have an amp.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [AudiophileON](#) — Buying guide
- [Recordbuilds](#) — Buying guide

# Digital Photo Frames

## What to look for:

This is one of the most-loved gifts for grandparents and family far away — you load photos from your phone and they appear on their frame automatically. The thing that makes or breaks it isn't the screen, it's how easy it is to send pictures. The best frames let the whole family email or app-send photos straight to Grandma's frame, with no work on her end. Look at screen size and whether it's a squarish 4:3 ratio (matches phone photos better than widescreen), resolution (sharper is nicer but not critical), and — importantly — whether there's an ongoing subscription fee or ads. Gotchas: some brands charge a monthly or yearly fee for cloud features; others (like Aura) give free unlimited storage, which is friendlier for a gift. Set it up and load the first batch of photos yourself before wrapping it — that's the real gift, a frame already full of memories. And make sure it connects to their Wi-Fi, not yours.

GOOD

### Skylight Frame 2 (10")

\$160-\$180 (verify (check current price); ~\$169.99 without the Plus subscription)

*The grandparent favorite — dead-simple setup and email-a-photo sending the whole family can use.*

**Key specs:** 10-inch touchscreen · Email photos straight to the frame · 16GB storage, works offline · Very simple for non-techy users · Some premium features need Skylight Plus

**Best for:** Grandparents and anyone who wants zero-fuss setup

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

BETTER

### Nixplay 10.1" Smart Frame

\$150-\$200 (verify (check current price))

*A top-reviewed all-rounder — easy family sharing from a phone app to one frame or many at once.*

**Key specs:** 10.1-inch display · App and email photo sharing · Send to multiple frames at once · Good motion sensor and scheduling · Optional Nixplay Plus subscription for extra features

**Best for:** Families who want to share to several relatives' frames together

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Aura Aspen (11.8")****\$199-\$229 (verify  
(check current price);  
often ~\$199)**

*The premium pick — beautiful design, a lovely screen and free unlimited photo storage with no subscription.*

**Key specs:** 11.8-inch high-quality 1600x1200 display · Free unlimited cloud storage, no fees · Elegant frame design (replaced the Aura Mason) · Easy app-based sharing · Auto-adjusts brightness and orientation

**Best for:** The gift that should look great on a mantel with no ongoing costs

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

★ **Great gift for:**

Great gift for a long-distance grandparent or parent — load it with family photos before you wrap it.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Tom's Guide](#) — Top pick
- [TechRadar](#) — Recommended
- [Reviewed](#) — Buying guide

## Portable Bluetooth speakers (compact)

### What to look for:

For a grab-and-go speaker, look for IP67 or IPX7 waterproofing (survives the pool, beach, and shower), 10 or more hours of battery, and a clip or strap. Tiny “soap-bar” speakers are plenty loud for a bedroom, kitchen, or dorm; step up a size for the backyard. USB-C charging is standard now. A nice bonus: pairing two of the same speaker for bigger stereo sound.

**GOOD****Anker Soundcore Select 2S****\$30 (verify)**

*The budget favorite: surprisingly big, punchy sound, fully waterproof, and all-day battery for well under \$50.*

**Key specs:** IPX7 waterproof · BassUp tech · ~20 hr battery · USB-C charging · Stereo pairing with a second unit

**Best for:** A first speaker for a kid's room, dorm, or backpack

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****JBL Go 4****\$45 (\$49.99 list, often less — verify)**

*Pocket-sized and rugged, with JBL's lively tuning — the easy crowd-pleaser that fits anywhere.*

**Key specs:** IP67 dust & waterproof · ~7 hr battery · USB-C charging · Built-in loop · Auracast multi-speaker

**Best for:** A tidy, take-anywhere gift in fun colors

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****JBL Clip 5****\$60 (\$69.99 list — verify)**

*The upgrade pick: a built-in carabiner clips it to a bag or shower rail, with louder, fuller sound and longer battery than the Go.*

**Key specs:** Integrated carabiner clip · IP67 dust & waterproof · ~12 hr battery · USB-C charging · Auracast multi-speaker

**Best for:** Someone who'll take it hiking, biking, or to the beach

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Teens, students, and anyone who wants easy music in the kitchen, shower, backyard, or dorm.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [RTINGS](#)
- [What Hi-Fi?](#)
- [SoundGuys](#)



# Section D

## Smart Home

10 gift categories · Good · Better · Best

BillsHomeTech.com · (330) 200-8042

# Wi-Fi routers & mesh systems

## What to look for:

For most homes a two- or three-piece mesh system beats a single router because it spreads coverage into back bedrooms and basements. Wi-Fi 6 is plenty for streaming and video calls and is the budget-friendly choice; Wi-Fi 7 is newer and future-proof but only matters if you have gigabit-plus internet and very new phones/laptops. Watch the fine print: some brands push optional security subscriptions (eero Plus, Netgear Armor) that you do not need for basic use. One timely gotcha for 2026 is that TP-Link routers are under FCC review over their China ties, so if that worries you, an Amazon eero or Netgear system sidesteps the issue; also note eero has a built-in Thread/Matter smart-home radio, handy if you plan to add smart-home gear.

GOOD

Amazon eero 6+ (2-pack or 3-pack)

\$100-200 depending on pack size (verify)

*Dead-simple app setup makes it the easiest mesh for a non-techie household.*

**Key specs:** Wi-Fi 6 dual-band · Up to ~1,500 sq ft per unit (3-pack ~4,500 sq ft) · Handles gigabit internet and 75+ devices · Built-in Zigbee/Thread smart-home hub · No subscription required for core features

**Best for:** Average home that just wants reliable, no-fuss whole-house Wi-Fi

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

BETTER

TP-Link Deco BE63 (2-pack)

\$280-320 for a 2-pack (verify)

*Fast tri-band Wi-Fi 7 at a mid-range price, consistently rated a top value by reviewers.*

**Key specs:** Wi-Fi 7 tri-band (adds 6 GHz) · Multiple 2.5 GbE ports per unit · Strong range/speed in RTINGS and Tom's Guide testing · Covers large multi-floor homes · No mandatory subscription

**Best for:** Bigger or busier homes with fast internet and newer devices

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

BEST

Amazon eero Max 7 (2-pack)

\$1,000-1,200 for a 2-pack (verify)

*Top-tier Wi-Fi 7 speed and multi-gig wired ports with eero's famously easy app.*

**Key specs:** Wi-Fi 7 quad-band · Multi-gig ports (up to 10 GbE) · Very high throughput at range (RTINGS) · Built-in Thread/Matter smart-home hub · Easy app, no subscription for core use

**Best for:** Large homes, power users, or anyone wiring up multi-gig internet

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

### ★ Great gift for:

Great gift for a family with Wi-Fi dead zones or a house full of streaming devices.

#### Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

- [Tom's Guide](#) — Editor's Choice roundup
- [RTINGS](#) — 8.3/10 (TP-Link Deco BE63)
- [CNN Underscored](#) — Best overall mesh 2026

## Smart thermostats

### What to look for:

A smart thermostat pays for itself over time by trimming heating and cooling waste, and lets you adjust the temperature from your phone. First check compatibility: most work with common central heating/AC, but systems without a 'C' (common) wire may need the included adapter or a little wiring, so confirm before buying or plan for a \$75-150 pro install. There are no monthly fees for the core features on the mainstream models here. If smart-home tie-in matters, look for Matter support (now on Google Nest and ecobee) so the thermostat works across Apple Home, Google Home, and Alexa.

#### GOOD

#### Google Nest Thermostat (2020 model)

**\$100-130 (verify)**

*The affordable Nest with a clean mirrored display and energy-saving suggestions.*

**Key specs:** App + voice control (Google/Alexa) · Energy-saving schedule suggestions · Works with most 24V HVAC systems · Mirrored touchscreen edge display · No subscription for core features

**Best for:** First-time buyers who want smart control without spending much

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

#### BETTER

#### ecobee Smart Thermostat Premium

**\$230-250 (verify)**

*Includes a remote room sensor and adds air-quality monitoring plus built-in smart-home support.*

**Key specs:** Includes SmartSensor for room balancing · Built-in air quality monitor · Works with Apple Home, Google, Alexa + Matter · Built-in speaker/Alexa · No subscription for core features

**Best for:** Homes with hot/cold rooms or anyone wanting extra sensors and air-quality data

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Google Nest Learning Thermostat (4th Gen)****\$250-280 (verify)**

*Learns your routine automatically and now ships with a wireless temperature sensor.*

**Key specs:** Auto-learns your schedule · Larger edge-to-edge display · Includes a Nest temperature sensor · Matter support; Google/Alexa voice · No subscription for core features

**Best for:** People who want a true set-and-forget, self-adjusting thermostat

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

★ **Great gift for:**

Great gift for a homeowner who wants to lower energy bills without fiddling with a thermostat.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Tom's Guide](#) — Nest 4th Gen vs ecobee Premium head-to-head
- [This Old House](#) — Best Smart Thermostats pick
- [SmartHomeCompared](#) — ecobee Premium vs Nest 4th Gen

## Video doorbells

**What to look for:**

The biggest cost question is the subscription: most big brands (Ring, Nest) require a cloud plan, roughly \$5-10/month, to save and review recorded clips, while brands like eufy store video locally for free. Decide whether you want battery power (easier to install, needs occasional recharging) or wired to your existing doorbell (never recharge, needs a chime/transformer). Look for a clear head-to-toe view so you can see packages on the porch, plus solid night vision and two-way talk. Match the brand to the phone/ecosystem the recipient already uses — Nest for Google households, Ring for Alexa — since that determines the app and voice control.

**GOOD****eufy Video Doorbell E340 (Dual Camera)****\$100-180 (verify)**

*Free local storage means no monthly fee, plus a second camera that watches packages on the ground.*

**Key specs:** Dual cameras (front + package view) · Local storage, no subscription needed · Wired or battery power · 2K video, color night vision · Works with Google/Alexa

**Best for:** Budget-conscious buyers who refuse to pay a monthly cloud fee

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****Google Nest Doorbell (Battery)****\$120-180 (verify)**

*Easy wire-free install with smart alerts and some free event history in the Google Home app.*

**Key specs:** Battery or wired install · Smart alerts (people, packages) · Tall HD view, HDR night vision · Some free event video; paid Nest Aware adds history · Best with Google Home ecosystem

**Best for:** Google/Android households wanting simple setup

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Ring Battery Doorbell Pro****\$200-230 (verify)**

*Ring's sharpest battery doorbell with head-to-toe view and radar-based motion zones.*

**Key specs:** 1536p HD+ head-to-toe video · Radar-based 3D Motion Detection · Color night vision, two-way talk · Removable rechargeable battery · Cloud video requires Ring Home plan (~\$5/mo)

**Best for:** Alexa/Ring households wanting the best image quality and motion accuracy

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for anyone worried about porch pirates or who wants to see who's at the door from their phone.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [SafeWise](#) — Nest Doorbell = Best overall 2026
- [PCWorld](#) — Best video doorbells 2026
- [Tom's Guide](#) — eufy E340 recommended (anti porch-pirate)

## Security cameras (indoor & outdoor)

### What to look for:

The real cost of a camera is often the monthly cloud plan, not the hardware. Ring and most Arlo cameras store almost nothing useful without a subscription (Ring Home from about \$5/month; Arlo Secure around \$8/month), while eufy and Wyze let you record to local storage (a microSD card or base station) with no required fee. Decide if you want 'no monthly bill' (local storage) or 'full smart alerts and cloud clips' (subscription), and for outdoor use check that the model is weather-rated and offers color night vision. Wired models never miss a moment but need an outlet; battery models are easy to place but need recharging.

**GOOD****Wyze Cam v4 (1 camera)****\$35-45 (verify)**

*Cheapest way to get sharp 2.5K video with free local recording and no forced subscription.*

**Key specs:** 2.5K HDR video · microSD local storage (no fee required) · Color night vision · Indoor/outdoor rated with power adapter · Optional Cam Plus cloud plan ~\$3/mo

**Best for:** Budget buyers who want to avoid a monthly bill

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Walmart](#)

**BETTER****Google Nest Cam (indoor/outdoor, battery or wired)****\$100-180 (verify)**

*Best pick for Google Home households, with free onboard event history before you pay a cent.*

**Key specs:** 1080p/2K HDR depending on model · Up to ~3 hours free event video, no subscription · Works indoor or outdoor (weather-rated) · Nest Aware plan ~\$10/mo adds 30-day history · On-device person/animal/vehicle alerts

**Best for:** Google/Nest households wanting smart alerts with minimal fees

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****eufyCam S3 Pro (2-cam kit with HomeBase)****\$400-550 (verify)**

*Premium 4K outdoor security with local storage on the base station and no mandatory monthly fee.*

**Key specs:** 4K resolution with color night vision · Local storage on HomeBase (no subscription needed) · Solar-charging battery option · Weatherproof for outdoor use · On-device AI person detection

**Best for:** Homeowners wanting top outdoor quality with zero monthly cost

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for anyone wanting peace of mind about their home or an aging parent living alone.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Tom's Guide](#) — Best home security cameras 2026
- [Reviewed](#) — Nest Cam (battery) = Best outdoor
- [SafeWise](#) — eufyCam S3 Pro = Best no-subscription

## Smart locks

### What to look for:

The single most important step is measuring your door and existing deadbolt so the lock actually fits; most swap onto a standard deadbolt in under 30 minutes. Decide how you want to unlock: keypad code, fingerprint, phone app, or auto-unlock. On compatibility, Matter support matters here because it lets one lock work across Apple Home, Google Home, and Amazon Alexa, but note that some locks need a separate hub or bridge for remote/Matter access, so confirm whether Wi-Fi is built in. Also keep a physical key backup and check the battery type (most run several months to over a year on AA or rechargeable packs).

#### GOOD

#### Aqara Smart Lock U200

**\$180-230 (verify)**

*Loads of ways to unlock plus Matter support at a mid-range price.*

**Key specs:** Fingerprint reader, keypad, app, NFC · Matter compatible (via Aqara hub) · USB-C rechargeable battery · Apple Home Key tap-to-unlock · Fits standard deadbolts

**Best for:** Multi-platform households wanting fingerprint entry without a premium price

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

#### BETTER

#### Schlage Encode Plus Smart WiFi Deadbolt

**\$280-340 (verify)**

*Built-in Wi-Fi plus top-tier physical security and Apple Home Key tap-to-unlock, no hub needed.*

**Key specs:** BHMA Grade 1 (commercial-grade) build · Wi-Fi built in (no hub required) · Apple Home Key + keypad codes · Up to 100 access codes · Works with Apple Home, Google, Alexa

**Best for:** Apple users who want the strongest everyday security

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

#### BEST

#### Yale Assure Lock 2 (Touchscreen, Wi-Fi)

**\$250-350 (verify)**

*Clean, slim design with Matter support so it plays nicely with every major smart-home system.*

**Key specs:** Touchscreen keypad codes · Matter support (works across ecosystems) · Wi-Fi module for remote access (some versions) · Optional auto-unlock / hands-free · Physical key backup available

**Best for:** Households wanting a sleek, future-proof lock that works with any platform

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

#### ★ Great gift for:

Great gift for new homeowners, busy families, or anyone tired of hiding a spare key.

#### Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

- [Smart Home Field Guide](#) — Schlage Encode Plus top-tier (2026 shootout)

- [BGR / Consumer Reports](#) — Best smart locks
- [SmartLockMfg](#) — Tested: Yale, Schlage, Aqara

## Smart lighting (bulbs/strips)

### What to look for:

Decide whether you want a hub system or hub-free: Philips Hue is the most reliable and polished but needs its Hue Bridge to unlock full features (including Matter), while Govee, LIFX, and TP-Link Tapo bulbs connect over Wi-Fi/Bluetooth with no hub. Matter support lets bulbs and strips work across Apple Home, Google Home, and Alexa, but be aware that even with Matter, some fancy vendor features (music sync, special color effects) only work inside that brand's own app. For strips, check the length and whether it's 'RGBIC' (multiple colors at once) versus single-color, and for seniors prioritize simple app setup and voice control over flashy effects.

#### GOOD

#### Govee RGBIC LED Strip Light (Wi-Fi)

\$20-40 (verify)

*Affordable, colorful, hub-free strip that's easy to stick up behind a TV or along a shelf.*

**Key specs:** RGBIC multi-color zones · Wi-Fi + Bluetooth, no hub · App scenes and music sync · Works with Alexa & Google voice · Available in various lengths (e.g. 16.4 ft)

**Best for:** Fun accent lighting for bedrooms, desks, or behind a TV on a budget

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

#### BETTER

#### TP-Link Tapo L535E Matter Smart Bulb (color, multipack)

\$25-50 per multipack (verify)

*Budget-friendly Matter color bulbs that work hub-free across all the major smart-home apps.*

**Key specs:** Full color + tunable white · Matter compatible, no hub required · Wi-Fi connection · Voice control (Alexa, Google, Apple) · Standard A19/E26 screw fit

**Best for:** People wanting cross-platform color bulbs without buying a bridge

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

**BEST****Philips Hue White and Color Ambiance  
(starter kit with Hue Bridge)****\$130-200 starter kit  
(verify)**

*The gold standard for reliability, color accuracy, and a huge ecosystem that grows with you.*

**Key specs:** 16 million colors + tunable white · Hue Bridge unlocks Matter + advanced features · Rock-solid, fast response · Works with Apple Home, Google, Alexa · Expandable to bulbs, strips, and outdoor lights

**Best for:** Anyone building out a whole-home lighting setup they can trust

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for a first smart-home dabbler or anyone who wants cozy, adjustable lighting without rewiring.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [SaveDelete](#) — Best smart bulbs & strips 2026 (Matter/Thread)
- [TechRadar](#) — Best smart lighting
- [Matter Alpha](#) — Best Matter strip lights

## Smart plugs & switches

### What to look for:

Smart plugs are the easiest entry point: pick one that works with the voice assistant you already use (Alexa, Google, or Apple Home), and if you want it to keep working long-term and talk to other brands, look for 'Matter' certification. Thread models (like Eve Energy) run on their own low-power network instead of your Wi-Fi, which is more reliable in crowded homes but usually needs a hub or a newer Apple/Google speaker to work. Smart light switches are a bigger deal because they replace an in-wall switch: the single most important question is whether your wall box has a 'neutral wire' (most switches require one; Lutron Caseta does not), so check that before buying. None of these need a paid subscription, and if you want to track energy use, confirm the model lists energy monitoring, since cheaper plugs leave it out.

## GOOD

**TP-Link Tapo P125M Smart Plug Mini (Matter, 4-pack)****\$25-35 for a 4-pack (verify)***Cheap, tiny Matter plugs that work with every major voice assistant out of the box.***Key specs:** Matter over Wi-Fi (2.4GHz) · Works with Alexa, Google Home, Apple Home, SmartThings · Compact design won't block the second outlet · No energy monitoring · No hub or subscription required**Best for:** A first smart-home gift or stocking stuffers for lamps and holiday lights**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

## BETTER

**TP-Link Kasa Smart Plug KP125M (Matter, with energy monitoring)****\$15-20 single / ~\$35 2-pack (verify)***The widely cited all-around pick: reliable, Matter-certified, and tracks how much power a device uses.***Key specs:** Matter over Wi-Fi (2.4GHz) · Real-time energy monitoring in the Kasa app · Works with Alexa, Google Home, Apple Home, SmartThings · Scheduling, timers, and away mode · No hub or subscription needed**Best for:** Someone who wants to automate appliances and see energy use**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

## BEST

**Lutron Caseta Smart Dimmer Switch (with Smart Hub, no-neutral-wire)****\$80-100 starter kit (switch + hub) (verify)***The most reliable in-wall smart switch, and one of the few that installs in older homes without a neutral wire.***Key specs:** Works in homes with NO neutral wire · Rock-solid proprietary RF (needs Lutron Smart Hub, included in kit) · Smooth LED-compatible dimming · Works with Alexa, Google Home, Apple Home · Pico remote option; no subscription**Best for:** Replacing a real wall switch in an older home or a gift for a serious smart-home user**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)★ **Great gift for:**

Great gift for anyone taking their first step into a smart home, or a parent who wants to control lamps and lights by voice.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [PCMag](#) — Best smart plugs (Editors' Choice)
- [Tom's Guide](#) — Kasa KP125M = top pick
- [Engadget](#) — Best smart plug

# Robot vacuums & mops

## What to look for:

The biggest price jump comes from the dock: a basic robot empties into its own onboard bin you clean often, while a 'self-empty' dock holds weeks of dirt in a bag you swap every month or two (bags are a small ongoing cost, usually \$5-15). Mopping is where marketing outruns reality: cheap combos just drag a damp pad and can't lift it over carpet, so they're fine for light kitchen floors but not deep cleaning; pricier models self-wash and dry the mop pads and lift them on carpet, which is what actually saves you work. Suction numbers (Pa) are real but overstated in ads, so weigh independent reviews over the box. None require a subscription for core cleaning, though a few offer optional cloud/AI features; check that before gifting.

GOOD

eufy Clean Auto-Empty C10 (E20 series)

\$250-300 (verify; often on sale)

*RTINGS' budget favorite: dependable vacuuming and an auto-empty dock without the big price tag.*

**Key specs:** Self-empty dock included · Strong suction for the price · App scheduling and mapping · Vacuum-focused (minimal or no mopping) · No subscription

**Best for:** First-time robot vacuum owners or homes that are mostly hard floors and low carpet

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

BETTER

eufy X10 Pro Omni

\$500-600 (verify; frequent discounts)

*Flagship-style features — self-washing mop pads and a full-service dock — at a mid-range price.*

**Key specs:** All-in-one dock: auto-empty, mop wash, clean/dirty water tanks · Spinning mop pads that lift on carpet · Strong suction with obstacle avoidance · Good app mapping and no-go zones · No subscription for core features

**Best for:** A home with a mix of hard floors and carpet that wants real mopping without top-tier pricing

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Roborock Saros 10 / Saros 20****\$1,200-1,600 (verify)**

*Top-rated all-arounder with the most hands-off dock and the best mopping and navigation available.*

**Key specs:** Full-automation dock: auto-empty, mop wash, hot-air dry, auto water refill · Very high suction with excellent obstacle avoidance · Ultra-slim body to fit under low furniture · Vibrating/lifting mop system for carpet · No subscription required

**Best for:** A big home or a generous gift for someone who wants to basically forget about floor cleaning

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for busy families, pet owners, or an older parent who shouldn't be pushing a vacuum around.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [RTINGS](#) — Roborock Saros = best tested; eufy = budget
- [Tom's Guide](#) — Saros 10R = best for pet hair
- [SmartHomeCompared](#) — eufy X10 Pro Omni vs Saros 10

## Smart home hubs / Matter-Thread controllers

### What to look for:

A hub is the traffic cop that lets your phone and voice assistant talk to smart devices even when the internet is slow; two words matter most. Matter is the common language newer devices speak, and a Thread border router is a device (often an Echo, HomePod, or Nest Hub you already own) that acts as the bridge between low-power Thread gadgets like door sensors and your home Wi-Fi, so you usually want at least one. The big gotcha is ecosystems: a hub tends to be happiest inside one world (Alexa, Google Home, or Apple Home), so buy the hub that matches the phone and devices the household already uses, and check whether older Zigbee or Z-Wave gear needs a hub with those extra radios. Most basic use is free, but some advanced features (like Alexa or Ring extras) can nudge you toward a paid plan.

**GOOD****Google Nest Hub (2nd Gen)**~\$100 (often on sale  
\$50-100; verify)

*An affordable 7-inch smart display that doubles as a Thread border router for Google Home households.*

**Key specs:** 7-inch touchscreen with Google Assistant · Built-in Thread border router + Matter controller · Hands-free voice control and photo frame mode · No camera (good for privacy in bedrooms) · Wi-Fi and Bluetooth

**Best for:** Families already using Android phones and Google services

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****Aqara Hub M3**

~\$130 (verify)

*The most ecosystem-neutral pick: it bridges older Zigbee devices into Matter so they work with Apple, Google, and Alexa.*

**Key specs:** Built-in Thread border router + Zigbee 3.0 radio · Matter bridge/controller exposes devices to all major platforms · Runs automations locally (works if internet drops) · IR blaster to control TVs/ACs · Wired Ethernet or Wi-Fi

**Best for:** Mixed-brand homes or anyone wanting one hub that plays nicely across platforms

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

**BEST****Amazon Echo Hub**

~\$180 (verify)

*A dedicated 8-inch wall-mountable control panel built from the ground up to run an Alexa smart home.*

**Key specs:** 8-inch touchscreen dashboard with widgets · Zigbee, Thread (border router), Matter, and Bluetooth radios · Wall-mount or stand (stand sold separately) · Alexa voice control and routines · Focused on Alexa; no native Google/Apple Home app

**Best for:** Alexa and Ring households wanting a central wall-mounted control screen

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

★ **Great gift for:**

Great gift for a family starting (or tidying up) a smart home who wants one reliable control center.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [The Gadgeteer](#) — Best smart home hubs 2026
- [Reviewed](#) — Amazon Echo Hub review
- [KnowledgeLib](#) — 11 Matter hubs compared (Aqara M3 top dedicated)

## Home safety sensors (leak, smoke/CO, air quality)

### What to look for:

These devices warn you about three different household dangers, and each works a bit differently. Water leak sensors are cheap pucks you set by the water heater, dishwasher, or under sinks; look for ones with a loud local alarm (so they still scream even if Wi-Fi is down) and ideally no monthly fee, while whole-home shutoff valves add plumbing installation and sometimes an optional subscription for extra monitoring. For smoke and carbon monoxide, confirm the alarm is UL 217 (smoke) and UL 2034 (CO) certified and note its replacement date (most expire in 10 years); smart models alert your phone but usually tie you to one app ecosystem. Air quality monitors (radon, particulate, CO<sub>2</sub>) are informational, not life-safety alarms, so treat them as a nice-to-know add-on. Watch for hub requirements: some leak sensors need a separate gateway to reach the internet, and a few platforms push paid monitoring plans you don't strictly need.

#### GOOD

### Govee Smart Water Leak Detector (Wi-Fi, multi-pack + gateway)

\$45-60 for a multi-pack (verify)

*Cheap, loud, and sends phone alerts with no monthly fee, so you can scatter several around leak-prone spots.*

**Key specs:** 100 dB local alarm plus app notifications · Needs the included Wi-Fi gateway (2.4 GHz) · No subscription required · Battery powered sensors, easy to place · Covers water heater, under sinks, washer, basement

**Best for:** Renters and homeowners wanting inexpensive early leak warnings

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

#### BETTER

### First Alert Smart Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Google-partnered, SC5)

~\$129 (verify)

*Google's recommended replacement for the retired Nest Protect, with phone alerts through the Google Home app.*

**Key specs:** Combined smoke + CO detection · Works in the Google Home app and links to existing Nest Protects · Battery and hardwire (SC5 Hardwire) versions available · Fits the Nest Protect mounting bracket · Google-ecosystem only; confirm UL 217/UL 2034 and replacement date

**Best for:** Google Home households upgrading from an aging Nest Protect

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

**BEST****Moen Flo Smart Water Monitor & Automatic Shutoff Valve****\$400-500 (verify)**

*Goes beyond alerts by automatically shutting off your home's main water line when it detects a leak or a burst pipe.*

**Key specs:** Installs on the main water line (professional plumbing install recommended) · Detects leaks, pressure and temperature issues, monitors whole-home usage · App alerts plus automatic shutoff · Optional FloProtect subscription (~\$5/mo) for extended warranty and insights · Works alongside separate Moen/Flo leak detector pucks

**Best for:** Homeowners wanting true whole-home protection against burst pipes and major water damage

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for new homeowners, snowbirds, or anyone wanting peace of mind against water damage, fire, and gas.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Tom's Guide](#) — First Alert SC5 = Nest Protect successor
- [SmartHomeUnlocked](#) — Best smart smoke detectors 2026
- [Security.org](#) — Best CO detectors



# Section E

## Cameras & Lifestyle

11 gift categories · Good · Better · Best

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# Cameras (mirrorless & point-and-shoot)

## What to look for:

A real camera still beats a phone for zoom, low light, and that nice blurry background, but only if someone will actually carry it. For a gift, honesty matters: a beginner mirrorless with a kit lens is the sweet spot for someone who wants to learn, while a good compact (point-and-shoot) is better for someone who just wants to point and click. Look for one that comes WITH a lens in the box (a body-only deal looks cheap but isn't once you add glass), a flip-out screen if they'll shoot video or selfies, and in-body or lens stabilization so shots aren't blurry. The gotchas: lenses and memory cards cost extra and add up fast, batteries are small so buy a spare, and the hottest compacts (Fujifilm X100VI, Ricoh GR) are often sold out or marked up by resellers. Megapixels past about 24 don't matter for normal use. Buy the brand's own kit, not a gray-market 'bundle' with a no-name tripod and filters.

GOOD

Canon EOS R100 (with RF-S 18-45mm kit lens)

~\$480 (verify; often \$430-\$500)

*The cheapest honest way into a real interchangeable-lens camera for a true beginner, and still Canon's entry model for 2026.*

**Key specs:** 24.1MP APS-C sensor · Comes with 18-45mm kit lens · 4K video (with crop) · Lightweight, simple menus · Canon RF-S lens mount

**Best for:** A teen or adult who wants to step up from a phone without spending a fortune

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

BETTER

Canon EOS R50 (with RF-S 18-45mm kit lens)

~\$680 (verify; often \$650-\$730)

*The reviewers' go-to beginner pick and still current for 2026: easy to use but leaves room to grow into photography and video.*

**Key specs:** 24.2MP APS-C sensor · Fully articulating flip screen · Uncropped 4K30 video · Fast subject-tracking autofocus · Comes with kit lens

**Best for:** A beginner who's serious about learning both photos and video

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Sony ZV-1 II (compact, built-in lens)****~\$850-\$900 (verify;  
MSRP \$899)**

*A true pocket camera that's far better than a phone for everyday shots and vlogging, with nothing extra to buy - still Sony's current compact vlogging model.*

**Key specs:** 1-inch sensor (big for a compact) · Wide 18-50mm equivalent zoom lens built in · Flip screen + good microphone · No lens or extra glass to buy · 4K video

**Best for:** Someone who wants great results but will never carry a bag of lenses

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for a new hobbyist photographer, a traveler, or a parent documenting the kids.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [RTINGS](#)
- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [TechRadar](#)

## Action cameras & 360

### What to look for:

These are the little rugged cameras you clip to a helmet, chest, or handlebars. Two things separate a keeper from a drawer-dweller: stabilization (so bumpy footage looks smooth) and battery life (most die in under an hour of 4K). A 360 camera is different - it films everything around you and you crop the shot later on your phone, which is fun but means more editing work. Gotchas: the camera price is only the start - you'll want mounts, a spare battery, and a fast microSD card, and some brands lock the best features behind a paid subscription app. Two availability notes for 2026: GoPro skipped a 'Hero 14 Black,' so the HERO13 Black is still its current flagship; and DJI's newest action cam (the Osmo Action 6) is not sold with US first-party support, so the already-authorized Osmo Action 5 Pro is the safer DJI buy in the US. Check the waterproof rating if they'll swim or ski.

**GOOD****DJI Osmo Action 5 Pro**~\$279-\$349 (verify;  
has dropped since the  
Action 6 launched)

*The value champ - best-in-class battery life and strong low-light video, and the DJI action cam still readily sold in the US (the newer Osmo Action 6 lacks US first-party support).*

**Key specs:** 1/1.3-inch sensor (good in dim light) · Long battery life vs. rivals · Waterproof to 20m without a case · Strong built-in stabilization · Front + rear screens

**Best for:** Most people, especially anyone who hates swapping batteries

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

**BETTER****GoPro HERO13 Black**~\$329-\$399 (verify;  
often discounted now)

*The all-around benchmark with the biggest accessory and mount ecosystem - and still GoPro's current flagship, since there's no 2026 'Hero 14 Black.'*

**Key specs:** 5.3K60 video · HyperSmooth stabilization · Waterproof to 10m without a case · Huge range of mounts and accessories · Swappable HB-series lenses

**Best for:** Bikers, skiers, and anyone who wants the widest mount/accessory support

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Insta360 X5 (360 camera)**~\$499-\$560 (verify;  
saw a mid-2026 price  
rise)

*Captures everything around you so you can reframe the shot afterward - the most creative option, and the consensus 360 pick for 2026.*

**Key specs:** Dual 360-degree lenses · 8K 360 video · Reframe any angle after filming in the app · Waterproof · Invisible selfie-stick effect

**Best for:** Creative types, vloggers, and travelers who like editing on their phone

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

★ **Great gift for:**

Great gift for a cyclist, skier, surfer, motorcyclist, or adventurous traveler.

Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [TechRadar](#)
- [TechRadar](#)

## Drones

### What to look for:

The big thing to understand before gifting a drone: weight decides the rules. Drones under 250 grams are the easy button - no FAA registration needed for recreational flying in the U.S. Once you cross 250g you must register (it's cheap and online, but required), and all drone pilots are supposed to pass the free TRUST safety test. For a gift, a lightweight camera drone with obstacle sensing and 'return to home' is the safe, forgiving choice. The big 2026 catch for US buyers: DJI (which makes the best beginner drones) is caught in a US import/authorization dispute, so its newest 2026 models - including the DJI Neo 2 - are generally NOT sold with US first-party support. Older, already-authorized DJI models (Neo, Mini 4K, Mini 5 Pro) remain available from some US sellers while stock lasts, often via Amazon marketplace or specialty photo retailers, usually without a DJI USA warranty - so confirm stock and warranty before buying. Other gotchas: cheap toy drones from unknown brands fly poorly; the real cost is often a 'Fly More' bundle with extra batteries (one battery = ~20-30 min); and you can't fly near airports or over crowds. Check that the price includes the controller.

**GOOD**
**DJI Neo**

~\$149-\$199 (verify; the original Neo, now cheaper since the US-unavailable Neo 2 launched)

*The simplest possible start - palm-launch, follows you, and is light and forgiving for a first flyer; the Neo 2 is the newer version but isn't sold in the US, so the original Neo is the practical US pick.*

**Key specs:** Under 250g (no registration for recreational use) · Palm takeoff/landing · Follow-me and selfie modes · Records to internal storage (fills up fast) · Very beginner-friendly

**Best for:** Someone who mainly wants fun footage of themselves without learning to fly

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#)

**BETTER**
**DJI Mini 4K**

~\$209-\$299 (verify)

*Real 4K video and proper drone controls at a budget price, still under the registration weight - an already-authorized model still sold in the US.*

**Key specs:** Under 250g · True 4K video · Up to ~31 min flight time · Handles wind better than toy drones · microSD storage

**Best for:** A budget buyer who wants a genuine camera drone, not a toy

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#)

**BEST****DJI Mini 5 Pro**

~\$679 (drone only) to  
~\$959 Fly More (verify;  
varies by bundle)

*The best small drone - a 1-inch sensor and 3-axis gimbal give photos and video a real step up; confirm US stock, as DJI availability is limited.*

**Key specs:** Around 250g (register it - it's borderline) · 1-inch sensor (largest in its class) · Obstacle sensing + return-to-home · Up to ~52 min flight time · Mechanical gimbal

**Best for:** A photography-minded giftee who wants near-pro aerial results

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for a travel photographer, real-estate or hobby videographer, or a gadget lover - as long as they'll learn the rules and you've confirmed US stock.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [DroneLife](#)
- [TechRadar](#)
- [Digital Camera World](#)

## Dash cams

### What to look for:

A dash cam quietly records your drive and saves the footage if you're in a fender-bender - great peace of mind, and a genuinely useful, practical gift. What matters: clear video (1440p/2K is plenty; 4K is nicer but fills cards faster), good night footage (look for 'Sony STARVIS' sensors), and parking mode (records while parked - but this usually needs a hardwire kit, sold separately, to avoid draining the battery). A front-and-rear two-camera set covers you from behind too. Gotchas: you must supply your own microSD card (and a decent 'high endurance' one - cheap cards fail from constant recording); hardwiring for parking mode is best done by a shop; and some brands charge subscriptions for cloud/connected features you may not need. GPS-logging is handy for proving speed and location.

**GOOD****Vantrue S1 (4K, front)**

~\$130-\$160 (verify)

*A budget 4K cam that punches above its price for clear day-and-night footage.*

**Key specs:** 4K front recording · GPS logging · Parking mode (hardwire kit needed) · Compact design · microSD required (buy separately)

**Best for:** A first-time dash cam buyer who wants quality without overspending

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Walmart](#)

**BETTER****Viofo A229 Pro (front + rear)**~\$260-\$290 (verify;  
higher for larger  
bundles)

*A reviewer favorite - sharp 4K front/2K rear with excellent low-light Sony STARVIS 2 sensors, local storage only (no subscription). (The newer A329S is a pricier step-up if they want the current video-quality benchmark.)*

**Key specs:** 4K front + 2K rear cameras · Sony STARVIS 2 sensors · CPL filter included · Local storage, no required subscription · GPS + parking mode support

**Best for:** Someone who wants front-and-rear coverage and great night video

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#)

**BEST****Nextbase iQ (4K smart dash cam)**~\$499-\$699 (verify;  
connected features  
need a paid plan)

*Nextbase's current flagship 'smart' cam (replacing the older 622GW) with Emergency SOS, 4G/LTE connectivity, GPS and live remote viewing - the feature-loaded, safety-focused option.*

**Key specs:** 4K front recording (optional rear/cabin cameras) · Emergency SOS (alerts services if you crash) · Built-in 4G/LTE + live remote view · GPS, Smart Sense parking guard · Connected features require a subscription

**Best for:** A safety-focused giftee or an older driver, where SOS and live viewing are reassuring

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

★ **Great gift for:**

Great gift for a new driver, a commuter, a rideshare driver, or any parent of a teen behind the wheel.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [Vortex Radar](#)

## Health tech at home

### What to look for:

These help people keep an eye on everyday health numbers at home - but keep expectations honest: they're for tracking trends and sharing with a doctor, not for diagnosing anything. For blood pressure, the one rule experts agree on is buy an upper-ARM cuff, not a wrist or finger model, and get the right cuff size - wrist monitors aren't recommended by the American Heart Association. For scales, a 'smart' scale syncs weight (and estimates like body-fat %, which are rough) to a phone app. Sleep trackers (a ring or a bedside/under-mattress pad) show sleep patterns but aren't medical sleep studies. Gotchas: cuff fit matters more than features; some devices store readings for only one user; and 'body fat' and 'sleep score' numbers are estimates, so watch the trend, not any single number. For an older relative, pick the simplest one with big numbers.

#### GOOD

#### Omron 3 Series (BP7150) upper-arm blood pressure monitor

~\$40-\$50 (verify)

*A trusted-brand cuff that's accurate and dead simple - the value pick experts keep naming.*

**Key specs:** Upper-arm cuff (the recommended type) · One-button operation, large display · Stores readings for one user · Irregular-heartbeat indicator · No subscription

**Best for:** Anyone starting to track blood pressure at home, especially older adults

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

#### BETTER

#### Withings Body Smart (Wi-Fi smart scale)

~\$100 (verify)

*A clean, reliable smart scale that syncs weight and trends to a simple phone app with no mandatory fees for the basics.*

**Key specs:** Weight + body composition estimates · Wi-Fi/Bluetooth sync to app · Multi-user recognition · Large clear display · Trend graphs over time

**Best for:** Someone tracking weight and fitness who wants automatic phone syncing

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Oura Ring 5 (sleep & activity tracker)****~\$399+ (verify;  
requires ~\$6/mo  
membership)**

*The newest, most comfortable and insightful way to track sleep and readiness - worn as a ring, not a watch. The Ring 5 (announced May 2026) is about 40% smaller than the Ring 4 with next-gen sensors.*

**Key specs:** Sleep stages, heart rate, temperature trends · Slimmer, lighter all-day/all-night ring · Days of battery life · Requires paid monthly membership · Detailed app insights

**Best for:** A wellness-minded giftee curious about their sleep (note the monthly fee)

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for a parent or grandparent managing their health, or a wellness-focused friend. Keep it factual - these track trends, they don't replace a doctor.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Consumer Reports](#)
- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [AARP](#)

## Kitchen tech

### What to look for:

The best kitchen gadget gift is one the person will actually use, not one that lives in a cupboard. Air fryers are the easy win - they're basically small countertop convection ovens, great for crisping without much oil; a dual-basket model cooks two things at once but takes more counter space. A sous vide stick cooks meat to a perfect temperature in a water bath - wonderful results but it's a slower, more deliberate way to cook (not for the impatient). A smart meat thermometer with a wireless probe takes the guesswork out of roasts and grilling. Gotchas: 'smart'/Wi-Fi features are often gimmicks - a reliable basic model usually beats a flashy app; air fryers are loud and the baskets need hand-washing; and single-probe thermometers can lose Bluetooth range through a closed oven or grill, so check the published range. Match the size to their kitchen and household.

**GOOD****Ninja Air Fryer Pro (4-in-1)**~\$90-\$130 (verify;  
often on sale ~\$89)

*A no-nonsense, easy-to-clean air fryer that consistently gets recommended and frequently goes on sale.*

**Key specs:** Roomy single basket · Simple dial/button controls · Dishwasher-safe basket · Crisps, roasts, reheats · Reliable, widely available

**Best for:** A household wanting one solid everyday air fryer

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****Meater Pro (wireless smart meat thermometer)**

~\$100-\$130 (verify)

*A fully wireless probe that nails roasts and grilling, with a guided app and no dangling cords.*

**Key specs:** Fully wireless probe (no cord) · Works for grilling, roasting, even sous vide/deep-fry · App alerts and cook guidance · Waterproof probe · Charging dock

**Best for:** A home cook or griller who wants perfectly cooked meat every time

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****Anova Precision Cooker 3.0 (Wi-Fi sous vide)**

~\$150-\$199 (verify)

*The reviewers' top sous vide stick - powerful 1100W heater and precise temperature control for restaurant-level results.*

**Key specs:** 1100W fast heating · Precise temperature control · App/Wi-Fi with guided recipes · Clamps onto any pot · Quiet operation

**Best for:** An adventurous cook who loves perfectly even steaks, eggs, and more

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for a home cook, a new homeowner, a griller/BBQ fan, or anyone furnishing a first kitchen.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [RTINGS](#)
- [Food Network](#)
- [TechGearLab](#)

## E-bikes, e-scooters & personal mobility

### What to look for:

This is a big-ticket, high-joy gift - but also the one with the most fine print, so go in clear-eyed. Range claims are optimistic: a '40-mile' battery often does far less with hills, weight, and cold, so look at tested range, not the box. Weight matters hugely if they'll carry it up stairs or lift it into a trunk. For safety, buy from an established brand with UL-certified batteries (cheap no-name batteries are a real fire risk), and budget for a good helmet and a strong lock. Gotchas: local laws vary on where e-bikes/scooters can go and how fast (classes 1-3 for bikes); these are heavy to ship and sometimes need light assembly; and one brand (Rad Power) went through bankruptcy in late 2025, so service support is a fair question to ask before buying any brand. A folding model is friendliest for apartments and commuters.

#### GOOD

#### NIU KQi 100P (electric scooter)

~\$350-\$400 (verify)

*A genuinely good cheap commuter scooter - the budget pick reviewers point to over sketchy no-name models.*

**Key specs:** Around 25-28 mi claimed range · Folds for storage/transit · App lock and lights · Established brand with support · Reasonable weight for a scooter

**Best for:** A city commuter or student wanting affordable short-trip transport

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Target](#)

#### BETTER

#### Ride1Up Roadster V3 (electric bike)

~\$1,395-\$1,495 (verify;  
varies by variant)

*Reviewers' best budget e-bike overall - light, clean-looking, and comfortable for everyday riding.*

**Key specs:** 500W-class motor · Claimed ~40-mile range (expect less with hills) · Lighter than most e-bikes · Belt/single-speed simplicity · Commuter-friendly

**Best for:** A commuter or fitness rider who wants a real e-bike without a premium price

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#)

#### BEST

#### Aventon Sinch 2.5 (folding electric bike)

~\$1,599-\$1,799 (verify)

*A top folding e-bike, now in its updated 2.5 version - fat tires and a fold-up frame make it versatile for apartments, RVs, and mixed terrain.*

**Key specs:** Folding frame (fits trunks/closets) · Fat tires for comfort and stability · Throttle + pedal assist · Color display, ~55-mile claimed range · Established brand with dealer support

**Best for:** An apartment dweller, RV traveler, or anyone short on storage space

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

★ Great gift for:

Great gift for a commuter, a car-free city dweller, or an active adult who wants to ride for errands and fun. (Pair it with a helmet.)

Read the full reviews (best-rated first):

- [Tom's Guide](#)
- [Electric Bike Report](#)
- [Tom's Guide](#)

Travel tech

What to look for:

Small, useful travel gadgets make great stocking-stuffer gifts because they solve real headaches. A Bluetooth tracker (AirTag for iPhone, Tile or a Google 'Find My Device' tag for Android) tucked in a bag gives peace of mind about lost luggage - note the FAA allows these in checked bags within battery limits. A power bank keeps phones alive on long travel days: 10,000mAh is pocketable, 20,000mAh charges several devices, and airlines cap how big a battery you can carry on (under 100Wh is the safe zone). A universal travel adapter handles foreign outlets - but a crucial gotcha: adapters only change the plug shape, they do NOT convert voltage, so single-voltage items like some hair tools can still fry. An eSIM data plan (bought on an app before the trip) is far cheaper than carrier roaming. Match the tracker to the person's phone brand.

GOOD

Apple AirTag 2 (4-pack) / Tile Mate for Android

~\$99 for AirTag 2 4-pack; ~\$29 single (verify)

*Cheap insurance against lost luggage - drop one in each bag and find it from your phone. The second-gen AirTag (launched early 2026) adds longer range and improved precision finding.*

**Key specs:** Longer-range precision finding (iPhone) · Year-plus replaceable battery · Works with Apple Find My network · FAA-allowed in checked bags · Tiny and light

**Best for:** Any traveler worried about lost or delayed luggage

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****Anker Power Bank (20,000mAh, USB-C)**

~\$40-\$60 (verify)

*Enough juice to top up a phone several times or run a tablet, from the most trusted battery brand.*

**Key specs:** 20,000mAh capacity · USB-C fast charging (30W+) · Airline-legal (<100Wh) for carry-on · Charges 2+ devices · Durable

**Best for:** A frequent flyer or road-tripper who runs devices dry

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****EPICKA Universal Travel Adapter (TA-105)**

~\$25-\$30 (verify)

*One adapter covers 200+ countries with multiple USB ports - the single most useful thing in an international carry-on.*

**Key specs:** Works in 200+ countries · Multiple USB-A + USB-C ports · Built-in fuse + spare · Does NOT convert voltage (plug shape only) · Compact all-in-one

**Best for:** An international traveler or exchange student

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

★ **Great gift for:**

Great gift for a frequent flyer, a study-abroad student, a business traveler, or a first international trip.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [MacRumors](#)
- [The Gadgeteer](#)
- [Travel Past 50](#)

## Kids & family tech

### What to look for:

The rule here is parental controls first, specs second. A good kids' tablet is really about the software locking - time limits, app approval, and age-filtered content - plus a rugged case and a warranty that replaces it when (not if) it gets dropped. The Amazon Fire Kids line dominates because of its bundled case, 2-year worry-free replacement, and simple parent dashboard; just know its 'Kids+' content subscription renews after the free year. A kids' smartwatch is mostly a 'call and text mom/dad' device with GPS location - the watch is cheap but most need their own monthly cell plan, which is the real ongoing cost. Gotchas: Fire tablets use Amazon's app store (no full Google Play), cheaper models are noticeably slower, and smartwatch monthly fees add up. Buy during sales - kids' tablets routinely drop 30-40%.

**GOOD****Amazon Fire 7 Kids tablet**~\$100 list (verify; often  
\$55-\$80 on sale)

*The cheapest safe-and-simple tablet for little hands, with a bumper case and 2-year replacement guarantee.*

**Key specs:** Kid-proof bumper case included · 2-year worry-free replacement · Parental controls + time limits · 1 year of Kids+ content included · Runs slower than pricier models

**Best for:** Younger kids (3-7) and a budget-conscious gift

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****Amazon Fire HD 10 Kids Pro tablet**~\$189-\$219 (verify;  
drops on sale)

*A bigger, faster screen with a slimmer 'grown-up' case aimed at older kids who've outgrown cartoonish designs.*

**Key specs:** 10-inch HD screen · Faster than Fire 7/HD 8 · 2-year worry-free replacement · Web browser + parental controls · 1 year of Kids+ included

**Best for:** Kids roughly 6-12 who want a capable tablet for school and play

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BEST****TickTalk 6 kids' smartwatch (or Bark Watch)**~\$160-\$180 device +  
monthly plan (verify)

*The newest TickTalk - a parent-controlled call/text/GPS watch that keeps kids reachable without handing them a smartphone, now with a 5MP camera and built-in eSIM.*

**Key specs:** Calling + texting to approved contacts · GPS location for parents · 5MP camera, IP68 water resistance · No social media / open internet · Requires its own monthly cell plan

**Best for:** Grade-schoolers who need to reach parents but aren't ready for a phone

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Target](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for grandkids, young children, or a first 'stay-in-touch' device before a real phone.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [SafeWise](#)
- [TickTalk](#)
- [GearJunkie](#)

# Accessibility & senior-friendly tech

## What to look for:

These gifts can genuinely improve daily life, so keep the claims factual and the choice centered on the person's real needs - and when possible, involve them. Since 2022, OTC (over-the-counter) hearing aids are sold without a prescription for mild-to-moderate hearing loss; good ones are 'self-fitting' with an app, and the honest gotcha is that severe loss still needs an audiologist, and a generous return/trial window matters because fit is personal. A big-button phone (flip or simple smartphone) helps with dexterity and vision; look for large text, loud volume, and simple menus. For living alone, a medical alert with fall detection can call for help after a fall - but know that fall detection isn't perfect (lab tests catch most, not all, falls), it usually adds a monthly fee, and a wearable only works if it's actually worn. Prioritize simplicity, big clear controls, loud sound, and easy charging.

GOOD

Lively Jitterbug Flip2 (big-button senior phone)

~\$80 device + monthly plan (verify)

A simple, loud flip phone with big buttons and a built-in Urgent Response button - easy for anyone to use.

**Key specs:** Large physical buttons + big text · Loud, hearing-aid-compatible speaker · Urgent Response help button · Simple menu, long battery · Requires Lively plan

**Best for:** An older adult who wants an easy phone, not a smartphone

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

BETTER

ELEHEAR Beyond (OTC hearing aids, pair)

~\$399/pair (verify)

A common budget pick among OTC hearing aids - self-fitting via app for mild-to-moderate loss at a fraction of prescription prices.

**Key specs:** OTC, no prescription needed · App-based self-fitting · Rechargeable · For mild-to-moderate hearing loss · Trial/return window (check terms)

**Best for:** Someone with mild-to-moderate hearing loss not ready for a clinic

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

**BEST****Lively Mobile2 medical alert with fall detection (or MobileHelp)**

~\$80 device +  
~\$25-\$45/mo (fall  
detection ~\$10/mo  
extra) (verify)

*A wearable help button that works at home or out, with optional fall detection and 24/7 response - reassurance for living alone.*

**Key specs:** Works in and away from home (cellular + GPS) · 24/7 live agents · Optional fall detection add-on · Water-resistant to wear in the shower · Monthly plan required

**Best for:** An older adult living alone, or a worried adult child buying for a parent

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#) · [Walmart](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Great gift for aging parents and grandparents, or anyone living with vision, hearing, or dexterity challenges. Keep claims factual - these are aids, not medical treatment.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [HearingTracker](#)
- [AARP](#)
- [NCOA](#)

## Coding & STEM kits (screen-free & robots)

### What to look for:

For younger kids, screen-free kits — snap-together circuits, or a robot that reads color-coded cards — teach cause-and-effect without another screen. For ages 8 and up, a programmable board or app-connected robot introduces real block coding (and later Python). Look for kits that grow with the child, run on standard or rechargeable batteries, and don't lock you into a monthly subscription.

**GOOD****Snap Circuits Jr. (Elenco SC-100)****\$25 (verify)**

*A classic, screen-free intro to electronics — color-coded parts snap together for 100+ real projects, no soldering or tools.*

**Key specs:** 100+ projects · Snap-together, no soldering · Ages 8+ · Runs on AA batteries · Clear, illustrated project book

**Best for:** A first hands-on electronics gift that doesn't need a tablet

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Walmart](#) · [Target](#)

**BETTER****BBC micro:bit v2 Go bundle****\$30 (verify)**

*A tiny programmable board that steps kids from drag-and-drop blocks up to real Python, with built-in sensors and lights to play with.*

**Key specs:** Block coding + MicroPython · Built-in LED display, buttons, sensors · Microphone & speaker (v2) · USB + battery pack included · Huge free project library

**Best for:** Ages 8–14 ready for genuine, grows-with-them coding

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Best Buy](#)

**BEST****Sphero Mini (app-enabled coding robot)****\$50 (verify)**

*A golf-ball-sized robot you drive and then program — block coding and simple games make it feel like a toy, not homework.*

**Key specs:** Drive + block-based coding · Free Sphero Edu / Play apps · Ages 8+ · USB-C rechargeable · Durable rolling ball design

**Best for:** Kids and teens who want a playful robot that teaches coding

**Where to buy:** [Amazon](#) · [Target](#) · [Best Buy](#)

**★ Great gift for:**

Curious kids and teens who like building, tinkering, and figuring out how things work.

**Read the full reviews (best-rated first):**

- [Tech Advisor](#)
- [T3](#)



# A Note From Bill

## A quick note from Bill.

I put this gift finder together to take some of the guesswork out of buying tech for the people you love.

I did my best to keep every pick and price accurate as of October 2026, but prices move around constantly — especially during the holidays — so please treat every number here as a starting point and check the store's own page before you buy. Anything marked 'verify' or 'approx' is a spot I especially want you to double-check. I have no affiliate deals and earn nothing if you buy any of these; the store links are plain searches so you can compare prices yourself. This is general information, not professional advice, and it doesn't replace a product's own manual. Go at your own pace, use your good judgment, and if you'd like a hand choosing or setting anything up, just call or text me. Thanks for reading, and happy holidays.

— *Bill*



Book a visit —  
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**Last verified: October 2026**

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**(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com**

**Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM**

For general information only — not professional advice. Prices move, especially over the holidays — always check the store's own page before you buy. — Bill's Home Tech



# I'll Set It Up For You

Picked something out? The hard part is often what comes after the box is open. I'll get it out of the box, set it up, move your photos and accounts over, and show you how to use it — in plain English, at your own pace.

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No affiliate links, no kickbacks, no pressure —  
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— Bill

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