

# Techie Christmas gift recommendations



John Deans

Most of us are in Christmas mode now that the Thanksgiving feast was had last weekend. I always get a kick out of hearing about these deal hunters that get up at 2 the morning after Thanksgiving to track down those Black Friday deals. I used

to mock those yahoos but have grown to admire them after realizing they can find some awesome bargains.

I still shop via laptop at home just to avoid the crazy crowds and dare not hit the Houston malls due to the horrendous traffic. When I am big ticket shopping, sometimes I'll go to a College Station store like Best Buy to eyeball the item then find that exact same thing online for usually a better price.

With Christmas quickly approaching, it's time to lock down those techie gifts and get them under the tree before the jingle bells start ringing. For two years running now my top Christmas gift recommendation is still the Apple iPhone. Since 2007 it has just gotten better with a few physical upgrades and numer-

ous software updates.

The latest iPhone 3GS is twice as fast and has double the storage capacity as the previous model. The real good news is that the price starts at only \$99 for the entry level 3G with 8 GB of storage, \$199 for the 16 GB 3GS, or all

the way up to the 32 GB 3GS for \$299.

My 3GS iPhone now has an actual GPS, a real compass, a functional movie camera, and a native voice recorder. Over the years I have purchased and downloaded over 100 apps from the App Store and even wrote one of my own. The Conservative Talking Points App was just named number one of the top 10 conservative iPhone Apps by About.com.

With over 100,000 applications available for the iPhone at the Apple App Store, you can also just purchase an iTunes Gift Card for someone that already has an iPhone. That way they can buy Apps, music, audio books and even movies that can be downloaded and played on their iPhones or iPod touches.

Another couple of good accessory gifts for iPhone'rs would be the quick recharge external battery at Brookstone.com for \$50 or just a second recharge cable and A/C adapter from Apple.com. Since the only downside of the iPhone is the limited battery life, quick recharging during the day or when you are away can be a life saver.

Most guys my age are paying the piper with our ears now suffering from listening to loud music in the '70s and/or shooting guns without ear protection. A great gift for us hard-of-hearing dudes would be wireless stereo headphones that can connect to the home TV and entertainment centers.

For less than \$100 at RadioShack, wives can get some relief from loud television volumes due to their husband's hearing problems. I solved this problem for me and my sweet wife by picking up a pair of these years ago. Now she sets the volume on the TV and I adjust my personal audio level on my wireless headphones while we watch Storm Chasers.

With Christmas time also un-

fortunately comes the holiday thieves. To be alerted if the bad guys come at night there is a great system called the Dakota Driveway Alert that sets off a doorbell-like tone on a wireless receiver in the house. When a vehicle crosses a rubber pressure hose laid at the entrance to your property gate the signal notifies you someone is here before they get to your door.

The pressure rubber hose detector is more reliable than Infrared sensors since there are no false alarms from bugs and raccoons. If the \$140 Dakota Driveway Alert goes off at 3 a.m. and you are not expecting someone, it maybe time go grab Mr. TwelveGauge just to be ready for any home invaders about to kick in your front door. Always remember, that BPD and the sheriff's deputies are reactive while homeowners that are armed, trained and mentally ready are proactive.

On the big ticket Christmas items list large screen TVs are cheaper than ever. I got a bad deal on my 60-inch Sony LCD Projection TV purchase only four years ago now that it is go-

ing dead on me, so I've been researching plasmas, LCDs and LEDs lately.

Since plasmas do not show up good in well-lit rooms like ours and there are reflection problems with windows during the day, those are out. LED TVs are still too new for me and I am still fuming over my last purchase that went sour too quickly. So, I'm opting for the more established and proven technology of LCD.

When we first bought our Sony 60-inch LCD projection for \$2,500 the true LCD flat screen TVs that size were around \$20,000, which was way too much for us. But, just a few years later we are able to buy a Sharp LC60E77UN 60-inch Aquos LCD TV for only \$1,999 which is a 90 percent price drop!

I pondered on the 65-inch version of the Sharp LCD but it jumped up to \$2,999 which is a 50 percent price increase for less than 10 percent more screen so I passed on that one.

For great digital pictures, nothing beats the value of the Nikon D5000 (\$750) as a terrific Christmas present for that special someone. Nikon's SLR digital cameras are outstanding and I used mine extensively during our Alaska vacation taking over 2,500 pictures with some now for sale at BigStockPhoto.com.

To augment SLR digital camera owners this Christmas you get buy them a neat wireless remote shutter control (under \$50) or a good sturdy tripod (around \$150) both of which will enable them to take crystal clear digital pictures.

Bottom Line: Let's all enjoy this Christmas, watch our spending, and pray for a productive 2010 — especially next November.

Next week's column: Dialup is dead.

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