

## Ep #36: Holiday Gifts Your Kids Actually Want



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Devon Clement**

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What do babies and kids want for the holidays? It might not be what you expect. And guess what? It's easier than you think. Stay tuned.

Welcome to *Parenthood Prep*, the only show that helps sleep-deprived parents and overwhelmed parents-to-be successfully navigate those all-important early years with their baby, toddler, and child. If you are ready to provide the best care for your newborn, manage those toddler tantrums, and grow with your child, you're in the right place. Now here's your host, baby and parenting expert, Devon Clement.

Hello, and welcome back to the *Parenthood Prep* podcast. It is the holiday season, which is one of my favorite times of year, as I've talked about. But it can also be stressful. And something that can be really stressful about it is getting gifts for your family members and for your kids.

They see all these commercials. They see all these toys in the stores. And you know what? Marketing works, so they think they want it. They think they want the latest and greatest, and then you go crazy trying to get it for them. You get it, you wait in these super long lines or you're up at 4 a.m. because there's a restock or whatever, they play with it for two seconds, and then they don't care about it anymore. And that is really frustrating.

So I want to talk about what kids actually want for Christmas. And you know what? A lot of these things are free. Many of these things are free or extremely cheap. I mean, there's plenty of gift guides out there for stuff you can spend your money on, usually with affiliate links and commissions so that somebody is making money on your spending money.

But I'm not going to do that to you. I am going to tell you about some great, free, and cheap gift ideas for babies and kids this holiday season. So first of all, you get them that great, amazing present, they open it, and what do they want to play with more? The wrapping paper.

Babies love actual garbage; empty cardboard boxes, tissue paper, wrapping paper. Wrap up a bunch of boxes that are just full of crumpled wrapping paper,

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they will be thrilled. It will be the best holiday ever if you do that. They will absolutely love that because that is all that they want.

Honestly, all these “it” toys and whatever, your family members are going to get them. People are going to get your kids all kinds of crap that they don't need. And you don't need to add to that as their parents. Or even as a friend or family member, you don't want to be yet another person giving them some more garbage that they're going to have to find a place to store.

Also, I read this recently and I think it makes so much sense. You want to get rid of old toys to make room for the new, but a lot of people will do that after the holidays, when the new toys are in and you need to make space for them.

And this piece of advice that I read said to get rid of the toys your kids aren't playing with in the early part of December, in November, in the fall. Even in mid-December before Christmas, before the holidays, so that the parents who are buying the toys second-hand, at the used shops and stuff, are able to give their kids these great toys for the holidays. So they have something to shop for and something to get.

Which I think is just brilliant. When you're donating stuff or you're giving hand-me-downs to someone, give it to the parents and say, “Wrap this up for Christmas. They never have to know that it was my kid's first.” Reduce, reuse, recycle. I love it. You know, whether somebody's in need or not. I mean, my friends and I are giving each other hand-me-downs all the time. It's not even about that.

But if you're giving something away, if you're donating something, do it before the holidays so that people can take advantage of it and be able to use it for their own gifts.

So, besides actual garbage like wrapping paper and boxes, water bottles. Babies freaking love water bottles, whether they have water in them or not. Sticks, they love sticks. Obviously be safe, be careful, supervise them. We don't want anybody poking out an eye or putting a stick in their mouth.

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But just think about, what does my baby really want to play with? What do they love? What do they think is so great? Crinkly paper. My sister and I love ... there's a million videos on the internet of babies ripping paper and laughing like it's the funniest thing they've ever seen in their life. Get a newspaper and let them rip it up. They will be so thrilled. This is what they want.

And guess what? When they're done playing with it, it all can get recycled or all can go in the trash. It's gone. You don't have to store it. You don't have to figure out where to keep it.

Stuff that's free; packing materials, bubble wrap. When I was a kid, oh my God, I would have killed for bubble wrap. Now I can see it all the time because we get everything delivered. But collect a bunch of bubble wrap from all your holiday packages, give that to them, and let them pop the bubble wrap. It's such a good sensory experience for a toddler or an older kid.

The brown paper that sometimes comes in boxes. Spread that out on the table like a huge piece of paper and just color on it, or trace your body or paint on it. Save a bunch of those brown papers. And if you don't get a lot of packages delivered, maybe have your neighbors save those for you and just give them those. Say, "We're going to cover the wall and you'll be able to draw all over the wall." What a cool experience that kids want.

The thing you have to understand about kids is that their lives are so different from ours as adults. The things that they want to do are so different from the things that we want to do that we find boring or not interesting. You don't want to color on the walls. Or if you do, you're allowed to because it's your house. You can get paint or wallpaper or paint a mural or hang a poster or something.

Kids don't get to do that. So being able to have that choice, and being able to do something as exciting as drawing on the wall, is incredible. Get them some washable markers and just let them draw on the wall for a day or whatever. What a great gift.

Paint chips at the paint store, like at Home Depot or whatever. They have those strips of different colors. Go get a bunch of those and wrap those up. Oh my

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God, as a kid, I would love to cut those up. I still do, who are we kidding? Cut those up and use them for art projects. Just look at them. Just admire them. Just decorate the rooms. Decorate the fashion designs with the different colors. Get me paint chips.

Another great idea, speaking of decorating, band-aids. Kids freaking love band-aids! They want to use all your household band-aids; sticking them on imaginary cuts. Get them their own band-aids. They sell them at the dollar store. Get a couple boxes of band-aids, wrap them up, put them under the tree, put them in their stocking, give them to them for Hanukkah, whatever, and let them use the band-aids however they want.

If they want to cover themselves head to toe in Mickey Mouse band-aids, let them. Because normally it's like, "We don't want you using all the band-aids because then we won't have any band-aids anymore." Those nice band-aids are expensive, but these are just cheap band-aids that are going to fall off in an hour anyway. Let them have as many band-aids as you want.

You know what is a great idea for a gift for kids that only costs a dollar? A dollar. Give them a dollar bill. Give them four quarters. Give them 20 nickels. They will be so thrilled. Little kids, they love money. And you'll know, if your kid loves money, you'll know. It doesn't have to be 20's. It doesn't have to be 100's. I mean, if they're teenagers, of course, they're going to want to use it to buy stuff.

But kids, just being able to give them some change, a couple dollars, let them put it in their piggy bank. Let them spend it on whatever they want at the dollar store or wherever. They love that. It's so easy and it's so cheap to make it seem like a lot more than it actually is.

Small things that are cheap that you can wrap up. Stuff that they can't normally have. So in my family, we couldn't have what my mom called "sugar cereal" all that often. You know, Lucky Charms, Frosted Flakes, Froot Loops, whatever. They have those mini cereal boxes in the packs ... The eight pack, 10 pack ... wrap those up. That's 10 gifts.

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And it costs what? Eight dollars at the store? I don't know how much mini cereal boxes cost, but they're cheap. And each one is an individually wrapped surprise. They're going to be so excited about each one. And then tell them they can eat it whenever they want, it doesn't have to be a special occasion for them to have Lucky Charms or Froot Loops or whatever.

Soda, if you don't normally let them drink soda. I'm not a big fan of giving kids soda, but as a special treat, that's great if it's something they really like. The grownup's drink, obviously not alcohol, but fizzy water or something. Kids always want to feel like grownups, so letting them have something that normally is just for grownups, or that you don't want them to have too much of.

One of my all-time favorite tweets is, "Being a parent is so hard because you try so hard to create special experiences for your kids. And all they talk about is that time you let them get a Dr. Pepper at the gas station." Literally, that is what stands out to them. That is what is meaningful to them. It's these little experiences that we think are no big deal because we can get a Dr. Pepper at the gas station anytime we want. They can't.

When I was a kid, there was a night when my mother took me to the diner. She was meeting a friend there. I guess I was still awake. I don't know why she took me to the diner. I don't remember any of the details of why I went with her. But what I do remember is that she told me I could get whatever I wanted. And we were not that kind of family. Dinner was dinner. Dessert was two cookies. If we were out to eat, it was like you had to get something that's a meal.

But this night she was like, "Get whatever you want." So, of course, I was like, "Ice cream. I want to get ice cream." So I got ice cream. And then I was like, "Wait a minute, can I get some bacon?" She was like, yeah. I got ice cream and a plate of bacon. This was 35 years ago, and I still talk about it constantly. Honestly, I talk about it all the time. It was such a highlight. Such a cool, special treat.

So think about, what are these special treats for your kids? Whether they're something you can wrap up or something you can give them a coupon for, take them to do that.

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Ask them what *they* want. Sure, they're going to say the toys off of the commercials and things like that, but they're also going to say some different stuff. A friend's kid one year wanted to make a box fort. He wanted to take over the living room with cardboard boxes and make a box fort. He wanted to take over the living room with cardboard boxes and make a box fort with his parents helping. What a cool, basically free thing to do.

Sure, it's messy. Who cares? You'll do it once. You'll leave the box up for a couple of weeks.

I got a desk for Christmas when I was 10; a desk for my room. I loved the giant box that came in more than I loved the desk. I put a blanket in there and a pillow and I turned it into my little reading cave. And I loved it. I had it for months before my mother made me throw it out. So do they want to make a box fort? Do they want to get bacon at the diner?

A little girl I used to take care of, the Christmas that she was two or maybe three, she wanted a bag of bagels. If you asked her what she wanted for Christmas, she would say a bag of bagels. And everyone was like, "What? Okay." And so, on Christmas morning, they went to the bagel store and they bought her a bag of bagels and put it under the Christmas tree.

She was so excited for this bag of bagels. She went around and handed out the bagels to everybody. She was thrilled. And it's not like they couldn't have gotten her toys or whatever that she wanted, she wanted a bag of bagels. So that's what they got her. So really listen and observe them and say, "Do you actually want the Action Jackson shooting Batmobile or whatever? Or do you want a bag of bagels?"

Sometimes it's just the gift of time or the gift of patience. Take them to the park or the library. Tell them they can stay as long as they want and you aren't going to rush them to leave. That is a huge gift. That is such a special treat. And listen, I'm not saying do this every weekend. I'm not saying do this every day. Don't do that. That's annoying. But tell them, "Next week when we go to the park, you can stay as long as you want. I'm not going to tell you when it's time to leave."

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“You can stay up late one night and we can have a movie night. I won’t make you go to bed at bedtime.” They’ll probably fall asleep on the couch at bedtime anyway. But just knowing that's something that is going to happen is great.

a great gift idea for your friends and adult family members... If you are either trying not to spend a lot of money, or people just don't want more stuff... I know for me, I'm constantly in a battle between wanting to buy more stuff and getting frustrated with the amount of stuff I already have ... hand-me-downs are actually an amazing gift.

My mother and sister and I used to do that, back when we didn't have a lot of money. If there was an article of clothing that the other person was always borrowing or a piece of jewelry that the person was always complimenting, we would just give it to that person as a Christmas gift.

And the plus side is you know that they like it. You already know that. So that's something to consider too when you're thinking about older kids or family members or things like that. It doesn't have to be expensive. And sometimes the best gifts are free or super cheap.

So give your older kiddos coins and dollar bills, and give your babies boxes of wrapping paper and they will be so happy and so will you. Happy holidays.

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Talk to you soon.

Thanks for listening to this week’s episode of *Parenthood Prep*. If you want to learn more about the services Devon offers, as well as access her free monthly newborn care webinars, head on over to [www.HappyFamilyAfter.com](http://www.HappyFamilyAfter.com).