



MEG BUSCEMA/STAFF

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Want to give gifts this holiday season that will make your friends and family smile — while avoiding another last-minute shopping frenzy? Enter gift guru **Robyn Spizman**. The author of numerous books on gift-giving, including “The GIFTionary: An A-Z Reference Guide for Solving Your Gift-Giving Dilemmas ... Forever!” (St. Martin’s, 2003), Spizman appears regularly on Atlanta radio station Star 94 and television station WXIA-11 Alive, offering expert advice on shopping, gifts and entertaining. She recently schooled writer Lisa Borello in the Buckhead gift store Swoozie’s about the art of “gifted giving.”

Smart Shopper: For truly personal gifts, Robin Spizman recommends observing friends and family to find out what they really like.

Q: What’s the key to memorable gift-giving?

A: The best gifts are the ones that touch our hearts and make us smile — and it doesn’t take a lot of money to be incredibly thoughtful. Gift-giving should be fun and have a sense of humor, but it shouldn’t be silly. If it slaps a smile on someone’s face, even for a split second, then it’s served its purpose. You want your gift to be memorable, so put a little fun and attitude into it and break out of the norm. Play with themes and be creative: Think about giving a gift within a gift, put your gift in a funky bag, or put a gift card inside a CD or DVD. If you’re still stuck, ask for help at the store — the salespeople know what’s hot that season, and they know what’s selling.

Q: Why do people find gift-giving, especially around the holidays, so stressful?

A: Mostly because people wait until the last minute to buy gifts, and they’re not clued in to what someone wants. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to buy great gifts; you just have to observe people to find out what they like. Ask questions and pay attention to what kind of clothes they wear, the brands they buy, the color of their eyes or where they shop. Details are the stuff that life is made of. When you pay attention to someone and give a gift that reflects their tastes, you give them the gift of attention, and that makes them feel special.

Q: How do you buy gifts for the truly hard-to-please?

A: The truth is, everyone is hard to shop for because everyone has his or her own likes and dislikes. The key is to make sure the gift reflects the recipient’s tastes, not just your own. Do your homework and find out what would be meaningful and special to them. If you’re shopping for a golfer, consider buying monogrammed golf balls. If the person is a sports enthusiast or a serious collector, consider getting a subscription to an appropriate magazine or buyer’s guide. When shopping for kids, ask another kid what’s cool — and what isn’t. There’s nothing wrong with asking your friends and family what they want, but if you want them to be surprised, ask them what the worst gift they ever got was to make sure you don’t repeat the same mistake.