

Best Buy presents

We've tested thousands of products this year. Here are some of the best for Christmas

Christmas seems to arrive in our shops earlier every year, but despite all this extra time to look for the right present, many of us still end up buying our loved ones the same old gifts. One in five unwanted

pressies is bathroom smellies, for example. If you're stuck for ideas for presents, have a look at these products, which are taken from our range of current Best Buys.

Cooking up a treat

If you're buying for a keen cook, these classy essentials may help you curry favour



Hand blenders

Which?, April 2007, p46

We loved the **Braun MR 4050 HC** hand blender (widely available for £30). It blends, chops and purées with ease. It's good at whisking eggs, excellent

at whipping cream and makes great mayonnaise as well as top-notch milkshakes and smoothies. Nuts and herbs can be chopped quickly

and evenly. It's light and comfortable to use, and the main shaft can be detached to make cleaning easier.

Hand mixers

Which?, April 2007, p48

The **Breville SHM2** hand mixer (£40 at Currys) could be a shrewd investment if you're buying for someone who really loves cakes. There

are ten speed options, it's great at whisking, whipping and mixing and makes mayonnaise lightning fast. It comes with a stand but you get quicker results if you hold the mixer. It's easy to set up and clean, too.



Food processors

Which?, April 2007, p49

If you're in a generous mood, the **Magimix Compact**

3100 (£155 from Argos) is impressive. It chops quickly, evenly and finely and is excellent at grating, slicing and kneading. Its labour-saving capabilities include having dishwasher-safe accessories you can store in a handy box.



Knife sets

Which?, September 2007, p69

A well-stocked kitchen needs a good set of knives. Our runaway winner was the **Anolon Advanced Collection five-piece knife block**. The knives are well balanced and comfortable, with soft, cushioned handles. You might need to

sharpen them when they're new but they made light work of all cutting jobs – even carrots, which can be tough. They can't go in a dishwasher, though. Available for £100 at Debenhams and John Lewis.



Gifts for the sporty

Which? researchers burned calories this year testing some of the best sports equipment

Treadmills

Which?, May 2007, p70

If you anticipate festive gluttony and think your body – or someone else's – needs a present to compensate, a treadmill could be just the ticket. Prices vary widely, but

our cheapest Best Buy – the **Tunturi T20** – will cost £640 or more. It's

less flashy than pricier models but has plenty of programs, a decent-sized running area and space for a water bottle.



Golf irons

Which?, April 2007, p62

The following two sets were Best Buys for men and women. Iron sets usually contain seven irons and a pitching wedge. You need to buy a driver, putter and perhaps a sand wedge separately.

The fantastic accuracy of the **Nike Ignite** irons sets them apart. They give respectable distance hitting and look snazzy. Men's and women's sets use hybrid clubs – which many find easier to hit with – to replace the three iron in the men's and four and five iron in the women's set. They're great value, too, at around £270 for eight irons from specialist stores. The **TaylorMade r7** irons are a pricey gift, at around £470 for eight irons from specialist stores, but give great accuracy and distance. We tested the standard version but options include a 'draw' version, suited to players who tend to fade or slice the ball.



Gadgets galore

Try these ideas if you want to treat someone to those non-essential or hard-to-justify electronic upgrades



Small photo printers *Which?*, July 2007, p54

The huge popularity of digital cameras has led to great options for printing your photos. Small photo printers are designed purely for printing your pictures (usually sized 6x4in), have automatic settings which make them easier to use than normal printers, and give great results. The **Epson PictureMate 240** prints excellent-quality pictures, is quite quick and, at 20p a print, its printing costs are reasonable. This printer is excellent value and costs £70 in Comet and £80 in Currys. We loved the quality of images and were particularly impressed by sharp outlines and realistic colours. It's easy to use and offers edit options allowing you to crop images, remove red eye and correct colour problems. For £129, you can buy the **PictureMate 280** from John Lewis. It's the same as the 240 but also has a built-in CD driver. Both are compatible with Apple Macs.

Micro hi-fi *Which?*, August 2007, p46

It may feel as if we live in a world dominated by MP3 players but there are great compact sound systems if you want CD playback and DAB radio. The **Pure Legato II** (right) and the **Denon D-M35DAB** (below) micro systems both look elegant and sound impressive. The Pure has an SD-card slot for playing MP3 files or recording radio; you can also pause and rewind live radio on DAB settings. It's £329 in a cherry colour and £349 in black, from John Lewis. We liked the dynamic detail of the Denon's sound. It's available at £349 from John Lewis. Prices for these models include speakers.



iPod accessories *Which?*, May 2007, p47

The rise of the iPod has led to a host of associated products. In May's article 'Souping up your player', p47, we found two innovations worth trying: speaker



dock alarm clocks and FM transmitters. Speaker docks let you listen to your MP3 player without headphones, but the sound isn't outstanding. We like the **Gear4 House Party 24/7**

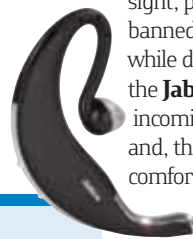
(around £70 online), which doubles as an alarm clock with AM/FM radio thrown in. It's compatible with lots of MP3 players but will charge only iPods. We'll be testing a wider range of speaker docks soon.

FM transmitters are a great way to listen to an MP3 player in the car. The **Griffin iTrip Auto** connects to the MP3 player and the car's cigarette lighter. You find a free FM frequency and select the same frequency on the device and your MP3 player transmits through the car stereo. The iTrip sounds good and recharges an MP3 while in use. It's £40 from John Lewis.



Bluetooth headsets *Which?*, September 2007, p64

These headsets have become a familiar sight, particularly since motorists were banned, in 2003, from using a mobile while driving. Our test's clear winner was the **Jabra BT500v**. The sound is great, incoming and outgoing. It's easy to use and, though heavier than others, it's comfortable. It charges in only two hours, but the battery will last for more than nine hours' conversation. There's a vibrate option, too. It's £30 from the Carphone Warehouse or £25.50 online through Amazon.



Other ideas

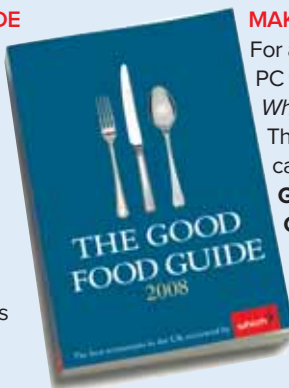
When you have had enough of Christmas turkey, think about eating out

THE GOOD FOOD GUIDE

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MAKE YOUR OWN CARDS

For a more personal touch, why not use your PC to make customised cards? *Computing Which?*'s recent test had two Best Buys. The website www.moonpig.com even posts cards that you create, from £2.99 a card.

GSP PrintMaster Greeting

Cards Deluxe (£20 online) is a software package that lets you make and print cards at home (this costs about £1 a card for materials and printing).



...AND FINALLY



Playing with presents could be a disappointment if you've forgotten to buy batteries. Best in our recent test were Duracell Plus AA (£3 for four in supermarkets), Energiser Ultimate AAA (£3 or more for four) and Tesco Hi-Tech AAs (£2.60 for four). All scored 96 per cent.