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WHAT TO GIVE AS A GIFT?



So you've started to date someone great... here's advice on what present is appropriate at this stage of your relationship.

By Jennifer Benjamin

The holidays are a wonderful time to be dating someone new, what with all the festivities and warm fuzzies. But having a new sweetie at this time of year can also leave you in a quandary about what to do gift-wise when you are in that awkward, just-started-seeing-each-other stage. If you've been out a number of times but haven't yet had an exclusivity talk, you may well be unsure what to do about gift-giving. Are pajamas too intimate? Is a gift certificate too impersonal? That little something you get for a not-quite-significant other may be loaded with subtext. But don't panic—we're here to help! out! These tips and suggestions will help you pick the perfect gift.

#1: Don't get too personal

Sure, it may feel as if you've known this person forever, but you really haven't, and buying a gift that presumes a certain level of intimacy can scare a lot of people off. "If you give a present that's too personal — say, lingerie for her or a night at a hotel for him — it can imply that you see this as a very serious relationship," explains Debbie Magrds, PhD, relationship expert and author of *All the Good Ones Aren't Taken*. "If you haven't had that dialogue yet though, you're better off buying him or her a gift that you'd get for a good friend."

#2: Listen for clues

Although you don't want to get your new sweetie a gift that might cause discomfort, a generic, coulda-been-anyone kind of present is also off-putting. "You want to be thoughtful about the gift and give your new guy or girl something that shows you've been paying attention," says Robyn Spizman (www.robyspizman.com), gift expert and author of *Make It Memorable*. "Think about the things that he or she has talked about on your dates, whether it's sports, pets, or a favorite hobby, and get a gift that matches his or her interests." See below for some specifics.

#3: Don't go overboard

Of course, you're not cheap, but if you spend too much money on your holiday gift, it might just make your new partner feel guilty that he or she didn't do the same. Imagine how you would feel if you got your mate a pair of socks and a T-shirt and he or she bought you a cashmere sweater. Talk about embarrassing! "If you've been dating for a few months, keep it under \$50," suggests Sherri Athay, author of *Present Perfect: Unforgettable Gifts for Every Occasion*. "If it's been less time than that, go with around \$20 or \$25."

Gift ideas for him

• If he's got a sweet tooth, whip up a batch of your favorite sweet treats — whether it's oatmeal-raisin cookies or homemade fudge — and package it up in a decorative tin or a basket lined with fabric.

A woman wants to feel like you really notice what makes her unique...

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• For about \$20, get him a Giftscription by going to www.giftscriptions.com. Like the name suggests, it's a gift certificate good for a year's subscription to one of 50 major magazines. Once he gets the certificate, he's able to choose for himself which one he wants, whether it's *Sports Illustrated*, *Popular Science*, or *Fortune*.

• If he's got a thing for cars, show him you appreciate his passion by getting him a gift certificate to a car-detailing or wash place. Have a little more dough to spend? GG Bailey makes personalized car mats to fit any ride (www.ggbailey.com).

That little something you get for a not-quite-significant other may be loaded with subtext.

What dating resolution will you stick to this year?

- I'm going to really focus on finding that special someone
- I'm going to get in shape so my self-confidence is high
- I'm going to get out there and socialize more

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I am a _____
 Woman _____
 seeking _____
 Men _____
 between _____ and _____
 25 _____ and 45 _____
 Located near ZIP/Postal _____
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• Drawing a blank? You can never go wrong with an iTunes gift card. If it feels too impersonal, you can throw in a coupon for dinner at your place and suggest loading up his music library together.

Gift ideas for her

• Women always love when a guy puts thought into their next outing. So make your gift a coupon for a stellar activity to do together, whether it's cooking lessons, a rock-wall climbing excursion, or even a painting workshop.

• If she adores her dog or cat, go to www.muttropolis.com to find everything from all-natural dog treats to blinged-out collars to squeaky toys shaped like margarita glasses or cute purses.

• A shopaholic with a taste for the finer things might love a designer handbag—not a gift you'd get a woman you've only been dating a short while. Instead, show her you're aware of her luxe inclinations by buying a key ring from Coach, Marc Jacobs, or any other high-end brand you know she loves.

• A woman wants to feel like you really notice what makes her unique, so buy her a scarf and gloves that go well with her eyes. Then, when you give her the gift, explain that you thought the light green or caramel color would bring out her pretty eyes.

• Obviously, few men know the intricacies of makeup and skincare. If the woman you're dating tends to pamper herself with spa days or pedicures or seems to really enjoy girly things, get her a gift certificate to www.sephora.com so she can have a little more luxury in her life.

Jennifer Benjamin has written for Cosmopolitan, Men's Health, Allure and The Nest.

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