

When my children were small and the budget was very tight, I struggled to find a formula that would keep my holiday shopping focused and meaningful. I came up with four “gift-ables” that have served me well for over 30 years and guide my holiday shopping today. Here are the four:

1. **Something Readable** - I wanted reading and story telling to be part of my children’s lives. The first year, it was simply buying *The Night before Christmas* and reading it to the little ones. As they learned to read and discover favorite authors this tradition developed into a home run shopping experience for the giver and a personal, meaningful gift for the receiver year after year.
2. **Something Wearable** - beginning with a tradition of new pjs and slippers (if the budget allowed) on Christmas Eve, this gift-able evolved with the age of the kids. It was a must have under the tree!
3. **Something Musical** - as a new mom, little did I realize the impact music would have on my children’s lives as they grew. From musical crib mobiles and pull toys to band instruments and then CDs and stereos- music was a part of every holiday shopping list.
4. **Something Huggable** - sometimes this was something snuggable but you get the idea. A soft blanket, plush animal, over sized TV pillow-even the boys were thrilled with their huggable gift year after year.

The merry part of this shopping list is that it can evolve with trends and ages and budget size. It worked in lean years as well as those times when we had a little more to spend, and, it kept me, the shopper focused on what really mattered. Even now when the kids reminisce about favorite gifts, more times than not, the gifts they remember were from one of these four categories.

Now that I am a grandma of 13 my list has evolved again- but the four “gift-able” components remain the same. For a recent holiday I bought each grandchild a mini MP3 player (**musical**). I pre-loaded CDs like the Disney Princess tunes for the 8 little girls and the Star Wars Soundtrack for the 5 older boys. I wanted it to come with a memory of me, and then let them add their own favorites. Each package was tied with a homemade fleece scarf (**wearable**). In the card (**readable**) I included a personal letter for each grandchild. It told them how much they meant to me, and I pointed out some of their most admirable traits and how their unique qualities and talents make our family special. It is something I hope they keep and read over and over long after I am gone. Oh, and the **huggable** gift? Well, that was ME! After all, what grandma wants competition when it comes to hugs??