

# Reining in kids' expectations for holiday gifts

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(HealthDay)—There's little doubt that gift giving has become a central focus of the holiday season, but as a parent you can still rein in kids' expectations when it comes to presents.

One popular rhyme suggests giving kids a maximum of four gifts: something they want, something they need, something to wear and something to read. This balances practical presents with at least one of their wishes.

However, it's also important to remember that the holidays are about far more than gifts. Research done at the University of Colorado, Boulder, showed that children get deeper enjoyment from special experiences rather than material items.

So, start, or add to, family traditions, like planting an evergreen that you will all watch grow over the years. Or take your clan along with nieces and nephews to a [holiday](#) show or go ice skating as a family. If finances allow, a family vacation can create treasured memories for a lifetime.

When you do go shopping for presents, look for ways to make gifts more meaningful. For instance, instead of buying a piece of jewelry for your teenage daughter, consider taking a jewelry-making class with her.

Keep in mind that you may have to buck tradition to make even small changes. Researchers in Australia found that exchanging gifts is such a powerful family dynamic that even people who are environmentally conscious give in to [family](#) pressures to give gifts that may not be eco-friendly.

No matter what you decide about gifts, now is a great time to teach kids the importance of giving back through an afternoon of volunteering or shopping for gifts to donate to worthy charities.

**More information:** The Nemours Foundation has ideas on how to [rekindle the spirit of the holidays](#).

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