

Gift ideas by budget

What each price band buys well — under \$25, under \$50 and beyond — and how to get the most gift for the money you decided to spend.

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Budget bands are a planning tool, not a rule. They tell you what kinds of gifts are realistic at each spend so a capped budget still buys something that lands. The bands below are descriptive — prices vary by retailer and change, so check the current price on the day you buy.

Under \$25

The band for stockings, office exchanges, teachers, hosts and extended lists. It buys well when you stay in the consumable-and-useful lane:

- Food and drink they already like, at a nicer grade than they buy themselves.
- The practical upgrade: a good pen, real gloves, a proper water bottle, a quality hand cream.
- Small games, puzzle books, playing cards, a candle, a paperback.
- A donation-style gift only if you know the person wants one.

At this price the wrapping does more work than the item — a tag and ribbon turn a \$12 thing into a gift.

\$25 to \$50

The band for friends, extended family and most exchanges with a real limit. It buys:

- A hardback, a boxed set of a series they like, or a speciality-food version of something they cook with.
- The mid-range upgrade: a decent umbrella, a proper kitchen knife, a warm scarf, insulated mug.
- A hobby item: the yarn, the plant, the golf accessory, the art supplies — things they want but keep deferring.
- An experience at the small end: a film pass, a class, an exhibit ticket, often as a voucher.

\$50 to \$100

The band for close family and the people at the top of the list:

- The version they would not buy themselves: the good headphones, the cast-iron pan, the leather version of the everyday thing.
- An experience with a booking: dinner, a show, a lesson, a membership.
- The bigger hobby item, bought only when you know the hobby — ask if you do not.

Over \$100

The band for partners, parents and milestone occasions. At this price the risk is matching the gift to the person, not the spend: an expensive guess is still a guess. Jewellery, tech, weekend-away vouchers and the big-ticket version of their hobby all live here — and so does asking directly what they want.

The rules that make bands work

- **Match the band to the person, not the other way round.** Set the cap per person first, then shop inside it.
- **One right gift beats two filler gifts.** If the band is \$25, spend it on one considered thing.
- **Count shipping in the band.** The price on the page is not the price at your door.
- **Check the price the day you buy.** Bands assume today's prices, not last year's memory.

Frequently asked questions

Is a cheaper gift ever okay for a close person?

Yes, when it is the right thing. A \$15 item they mentioned wanting beats a \$60 guess. Price proves nothing; the match does.

Do the price bands include shipping?

Count shipping in your budget. A \$22 gift with \$8 delivery is a \$30 gift.