



Holiday Gifting Guide

When to Buy



Finding the perfect holiday gift shouldn't feel like a guessing game of waiting for the lowest price. In fact, waiting for the biggest discount can often mean losing out on the exact item, size, or color you wanted—or worse, missing shipping deadlines entirely.

To help take that guesswork out of your holiday shopping, we analyzed U.S. historical promotional patterns, search trends, and discount data aggregated across merchants on Google. The result is our "When to Buy Guide," a data-backed guide mapping out when holiday discounts hit their peak across major consumer categories, based on 2025 data trends.

These trends should help you shop smarter this holiday season, but it's important to note that pricing and inventory can vary from year-to-year—so these insights should serve as general shopping guidance rather than absolute guarantees. Read on to discover when to buy, what to watch out for, and how to make Google's retail data work for you this gifting season.



Beauty & Personal Care



Fragrance

- **When to Buy:** Tuesday leading into Black Friday, through Cyber Monday.
- **The Data:** During the peak Black Friday window, you'll see a strong selection of fragrances, with the maximum volume of products discounted.

The Strategy:

If you are shopping for fragrances, buy within two weeks of Black Friday weekend.

Fragrance discounts don't get larger as Christmas approaches and the volume of fragrance deals declines- so waiting until late December offers minimal pricing advantage and inventory selection.

Makeup

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend for selection; late December for deepest savings.
- **The Data:** The variety of cosmetics on sale peaks during Black Friday weekend, but the markdowns tend to be modest. The steepest percentage price cuts do not arrive until the final weeks of December on remaining stock.
- **The Strategy:** Use a two-step approach: purchase specific shades and must-have holiday palettes early to guarantee availability, but hold off on flexible purchases until late-December clearance to capture the biggest savings.

Skincare & Personal Care

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend.
- **The Data:** The promotional breadth of personal care products peaks during Black Friday weekend, offering the widest selection of brands on sale. Steep late-December clearance markdowns have become increasingly rare in recent years.
- **The Strategy:** Don't gamble on late clearance. Secure preferred skincare brands and daily self-care staples during early holiday sales before inventory and promotions dwindle.

Travel & Pet Gear

Travel Gear

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend for accessories; late December for suitcases and luggage sets.
- **The Data:** Discount availability for travel gear peaks during Black Friday weekend and steadily declines as the holidays approach. However, there is a clear split: while travel accessories see their best deals in November, major items like large luggage and suitcases don't hit their deepest markdowns until late December.
- **The Strategy:** Buy travel accessories, organizers, and packing cubes over Black Friday weekend. For larger suitcases, hold out until the final weeks of December when retailers roll out deep clearance on luggage.



Pet Supplies

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend for dogs and cats; late December for specialty pets.
- **The Data:** Dog and cat essentials see their widest promotional selection and steepest markdowns during Black Friday weekend, followed by a mid-December dip. Late December brings a sharp rebound in deep discounts for specialty pets (reptiles, fish, and small animals).
- **The Strategy:** Spoil your dogs and cats over Black Friday weekend. If you have specialty pets, wait until the final stretch of December when retailers roll out steep secondary markdowns.

Apparel & Accessories

Athletic Apparel

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend.
- **The Data:** Promotional activity for activewear reaches its height in the run-up to Thanksgiving, but tapers off by mid-to-late December.
- **The Strategy:** Complete workout apparel and footwear shopping during Black Friday and Cyber Week. While flexible shoppers might find scattered clearance items right before Christmas, the best mix of sizes and discounts happens earlier.

Women's Apparel

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend for specific styles; late December for clearance value.
- **The Data:** The broadest assortment of women's apparel styles and sizes on promotion occurs over Black Friday weekend, while the steepest percentage markdowns appear in mid-to-late December on leftover inventory.
- **The Strategy:** Split your strategy: buy specific holiday outfits and must-have sizes early, but hold off on everyday wardrobe refreshes until late-season clearance to maximize savings.

Men's Apparel

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend for specific sizes; mid-to-late December for flexible finds.
- **The Data:** For men's apparel, discount availability and markdown depth remain relatively steady from Black Friday weekend straight through late December.
- **The Strategy:** If you need specific sizes or sought-after styles, shop early. If your gift list is flexible, procrastinating carries little penalty because retailers roll out promotions right up to Christmas.

Shoes & Footwear

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend.
- **The Data:** Black Friday weekend represents the single best moment of the season for footwear, pairing the widest selection of styles on sale with the steepest overall markdowns. Shoppers who wait until mid-to-late December face a noticeably narrower promotional selection and significantly weaker discounts.
- **The Strategy:** Finalize shoe purchases during Black Friday weekend.

Handbags & Bags

- **When to Buy:** Mid-December sweet spot (or late December for maximum markdowns).

The Data: Black Friday weekend features the broadest selection of bags on sale, while the deepest discounts hit in late December.

Mid-December has emerged as a balanced window with improving discount depth and solid remaining inventory.

- **The Strategy:** Skip Black Friday weekend if you are deal-focused. Target mid-December to balance a high discount with decent style selection, or wait until late December if you just want the lowest price on remaining inventory.



Home, Kitchen & Garden



Appliances & Furniture

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend.
- **The Data:** Retailers launch their broadest promotional events over Black Friday weekend, delivering high discount quality and wide availability across major categories like large appliances, furniture, and bedding & bath.
- **The Strategy:** Make major living space investments during holiday kickoff sales. Inventory for bulky items is tightly managed, making early purchases essential for delivery and maximum savings.

Home Decor & Lighting

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend or late December - skip mid-December.
- **The Data:** Black Friday weekend provides a vast selection of decor on sale, followed by a mid-December lull where both selection and discount depth drop. Late December brings the steepest markdowns of the season on remaining inventory.
- **The Strategy:** Buy holiday decor during Black Friday weekend to enjoy it all season,

or wait until the final days of December to snag clearance prices on lighting and interior storage.

Kitchen & Dining

- **When to Buy:** Late December.
- **The Data:** Retail patterns point to deep promotional markdowns on kitchen, cookware, and dining essentials in late December.
- **The Strategy:** If you can wait until the final stretch of the season to refresh your culinary setup or buy gourmet cookware gifts, late December delivers maximum value.

Toys, Kids & Family Entertainment

Toys & Games

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend, or late December for games & puzzles.
- **The Data:** Black Friday weekend consistently provides the most favorable mix of expansive toy variety and deep discounts, particularly for board games and puzzles. Retailers maintain reliable discounts in late December while restocking games for family gatherings.

If you need last-minute gifts, family games and puzzles see refreshed inventory and solid discounts right before Christmas.

but delay other gifts to catch aggressive late-season clearance.

Baby vs. Kids Gear

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend for selection; mid-to-late December for steepest deals.
- **The Data:** Thanksgiving brings the widest selection of sales for baby and kids' gear. By mid-to-late December, deal availability falls while average savings rises.
- **The Strategy:** Split your parenting cart: buy essentials over Black Friday to ensure model availability,

Outdoor Play

- **When to Buy:** Mid-December.
- **The Data:** While general toy discounts cool down in the middle of the month, outdoor play equipment sees a surge in markdowns and improved promotional availability during mid-December.
- **The Strategy:** If you are shopping for backyard play sets, ride-ons, or outdoor play items, target the second week of December to take advantage of markdowns.



The Strategy:

Tackle major toy wishlists during the initial holiday kickoff when shelves are full.

Electronics & Gaming



Core Electronics

(TV, Audio, Home Security)

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend through Cyber Week.
- **The Data:** Black Friday weekend delivers the largest volume of electronics on sale alongside the season's most substantial price drops across TVs, audio gear, and home security, before promotional intensity softens in December.
- **The Strategy:** Do not wait on big screens and smart home setups. Cyber Week remains the undisputed powerhouse for doorbusters and bundle packages; waiting until December results in softer discounts and backorders.

Gaming

(Consoles & Titles)

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend (primary) or late December (secondary).
- **The Data:** Black Friday weekend offers the largest selection of gaming gear on promotion and the steepest markdowns. Deal quality softens noticeably in mid-December before a second wave of discounts rebounds right before the holidays conclude.
- **The Strategy:** Buy during Black Friday weekend for the premier bundle deals. If you miss the kickoff, skip the mid-December slump and wait for late-December holiday promotions to return.

Electronic Toys

- **When to Buy:** The week before Christmas.
- **The Data:** Unlike traditional electronics, categories like drones and motorized tech toys show some of their steepest markdowns emerging in the final weeks of December.
- **The Strategy:** Play the waiting game.

If remote-controlled gadgets or electronic toys are on your wishlist, holding out until the final shopping stretch unlocks surprise last-minute value.

Sports, Fitness & Outdoors



Fitness Equipment

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend for variety; mid-to-late December for deepest price cuts.
- **The Data:** Black Friday weekend offers the largest variety of exercise machines and weights on sale. However the steepest markdowns arrive in mid-to-late December on a narrower range of items.
- **The Strategy:** Choose your trade-off: buy around Black Friday weekend if you need a specific treadmill, bike, or brand, but hold out until late December if you have a flexible wishlist and want rock-bottom pricing.

Sports Gear

- **When to Buy:** Black Friday weekend for hunting & golf; late December for cycling, outdoor games & boards.
- **The Data:** Black Friday weekend offers the widest selection for hunting, fishing, and golf gear. Late December delivers the season's deepest price cuts on cycling equipment and outdoor games.
- **The Strategy:** Match your sport to the calendar: purchase hunting and golf equipment during Black Friday weekend sales, but wait until late December for wheels, scooters, and backyard games.

Behavioral Trends

Data Proves We Procrastinate More on Dads:

Search interest in "last minute gift for mom" first spikes December 23,

while searches for "last minute gift for dad" do not register significant spikes until December 24, suggesting dads are the ultimate recipients of last-second purchases.

New Yorkers consistently procrastinate gifting:

New York state has consistently ranked in the top three states for "last minute gifts" searches over the last three years.



Timeline Trends

December 22

Shipping Cutoffs Drive Overnight Searches & DIY:
December 22 is the annual spike day for “next day shipping” queries in the U.S. It also marks the #1 day of the year for DIY gift searches as consumers evaluate whether to pay premium freight or make something by hand.

December 23

"Near Me" Searches Peak as Deadlines Pass:
What shoppers search: "gifts near me" and "in store pickup". With delivery guarantees expired, consumers look to physical brick-and-mortar stores within driving distance. “Gifts near me” and “in store pickup” hit their peak search interest of the entire year on this day.

December 24

Last-Minute Panic Sparks Same-Day Pickup:
Shoppers spend Christmas Eve searching for stores offering curbside pickup. "Same day pickup," reaches its annual peak.

December 25

Retail is Closed, Send an E-Gift Card:
Physical retail is largely closed, driving peak annual interest toward instant digital delivery—streaming subscriptions, online vouchers, and digital gift cards that land instantly in an inbox. Searches for “e-gift card,” “digital gift card,” “subscription gift” and “stores open near me,” spike on this day.

Methodology note for pricing data
Promotional coverage and discount trends reflect historical data across U.S. merchants on Google. Insights reflect historical promotional patterns and are intended as general shopping guidance, not price guarantees.

This analysis utilizes aggregated Google data to track category pricing trends and discounts over the holiday season. To reflect the actual consumer experience, the calculation uses an impression-weighted methodology, which factors in the products most frequently viewed by shoppers across both organic product listings and paid shopping ads. For each retail category, the data measures two key variables: discount coverage (the percentage of viewed products actively on sale) and discount depth (the average percentage of the price reduction). Applying this structural approach limits the impact of price outliers and provides a representative, aggregated view of when category-wide deals typically occur.

• Black Friday weekend = Tuesday before Thanksgiving - Cyber Monday (Nov. 24 - Nov. 30, 2026)
• Early December = 24-16 days before Christmas (Dec. 1 - Dec. 9, 2026)
• Mid December = 15 to 8 days before Christmas (Dec. 10 - Dec. 17, 2026)
• Late December = 7 days or less before Christmas (Dec. 18- Dec. 25, 2026)

Methodology for trends
Data source: Google Trends
Geo: US, Jan 1
2023-Dec. 31, 2025
Pulled on Sept. 2, 2025