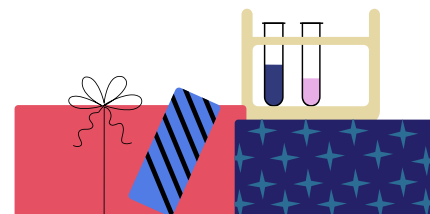


Gift Giving Cheat Sheet

The psychology of presents
from the Irrational Labs Gift Lab



What should I give?

#1: Make it experiential

Example: A hot sauce-making class or indoor skydiving

Behavioral Rationale: Experiences foster lasting memories, making them more emotionally impactful than physical gifts, which fade (hedonic adaptation). We get additional happiness from anticipating them

Tips: Bonus if you can find something they'd love, but wouldn't spend the money on themselves

#3: Choose something to share

Example: A board game or a cooking kit for two

Behavioral Rationale: Shared activities allow you both to enjoy the gift together, fostering connection & enhancing the social value of the gift

Tips: Look for gifts that align with mutual interests or encourage collaboration. Offering to participate yourself adds an extra layer of thoughtfulness

#2: Make it personal

Example: A custom piece of art featuring their favorite place or an inside joke

Behavioral Rationale: Personalization strengthens the emotional resonance of the gift through identity relevance. Plus, uniqueness lifts perceived value!

Tips: Consider their hobbies, favorite colors, or shared memories. Specificity amplifies the "wow" factor

#4: Go for the novel or weird

Example: A set of artisan spices from a cuisine they haven't explored or a fun piece of decor

Behavioral Rationale: Novel & bizarre things spark curiosity and excitement, making gifts memorable

Tips: Choose something intriguing but not entirely out of their comfort zone—a balance that ensures curiosity without confusion

Level it up: How should I give it?

Use Effort Cues

Effort signals investment, which adds emotional weight to the gift. Write a handwritten note to elevate the perception of effort. Even better: in the note, tell them why this gift made you think of them!

Elevate the Presentation

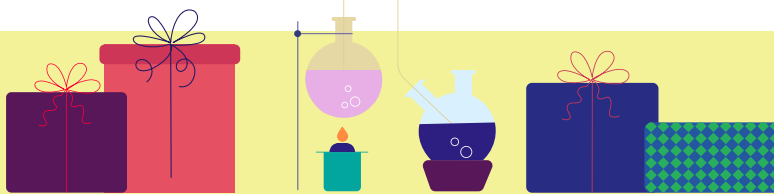
A beautifully wrapped gift creates anticipation and further signals care. For experiences without something tangible to wrap, package up some items that can serve as clues for the recipient to guess, or a magnet that can live on their fridge to get them excited until the special day comes!

Remove Friction to Use

Giving choice can offer appreciated flexibility (example: you'll cook dinner on a night of their choice!). But it puts the onus back on them to make it happen, adding psychological and logistical friction that make it less likely the gift will ever happen. Instead, give 3 options, or set a default they can change.

Time for Maximum Impact

The timing of gift delivery can heighten its emotional impact. Unexpected timing amplifies delight by breaking the routine. Opt for a mid-week pick-me-up like flowers or a small unexpected treat.



Gift Giving Cheat Sheet

BONUS:

The Irrational Labs team's gift guide 2024



For someone who's always

traveling: A small 4-in-1 cable to charge all devices. No more tangled cords or stress. -Michael

For someone who loves to

entertain: Olive oil all the way from our olive farm in Greece, or a jar of homemade tomato sauce. -Pauline

A rare or signed book by a gift recipient's favorite author (or one they might like but not know about yet) is a nice way to **show that you know them and give you both something interesting to talk about** next time you see each other. -Richard

For someone who loves to travel:

A disposable camera they can take on a trip with them, & you can reveal the pictures for them after. -Juan

For someone who's gone through a

life change: A gift card to a nice restaurant nearby (ideally enough for 2+ to eat). Good food/company can be such a mood booster. -Lisa

Darn Tough socks are made in the US, and are no-questions-asked replaced for life. There's a reason why **most hikers on the PCT swear by them.** -Channing

For someone who has everything

but time: A Taskrabbit subscription or gift card. -Evelyn

I love giving an Audible subscription for 3 months, with one actual audio book recommendation. **They get to listen and think of me.** -Kristen

Sofar sounds - An ideal night out **for those who love music, but don't care about the who or where.** -Jeff

Oblique strategies cards are a great way to break out of a creative dry spell. These strange and often obtuse interjections from Brian Eno are an **awesome gift for creatives who are always looking for a different angle** on inspiration. -Alex

The more crunched for time I am, the more pasta I cook. **Help someone save even more time** and achieve al dente perfection with an adjustable pasta strainer that fits on any pot. Takes up less space and gets less sticky than a metal or plastic colander. -Brad

A fun class you can **go to together to learn or experience something new!** (E.g. cooking, drawing with wine, dining in the dark, escape room). -Ceren

For someone with young kids: A baby onesie or kids shirt for their favorite sports team - fan loyalty starts young! -Isabel

Don't get gifts at all. My group of friends decided that we'd put money into a shared pool each time when we would otherwise have gotten a gift. We then spend the money on group trips and activities. -Monica

For someone who likes to exercise while traveling and then ease sore muscles, my partner loves the Theragun mini. -Katie

For someone who just moved: I've given several friends a customized return address stamp for their new home - it's personal and practical, and they love it! -Erin

For someone who loves to cook:

This meat share allows our family to experiment and try new cuts of meat that we would never normally buy; can also do the same type of gift with veggies for the vegetarian in your life. -Amy

My best friend shipped Caramelo tortillas to Canada and **it was worth every penny.** -Lindsay

For someone you want to spend

more time with: A coupon book of activities for the two of you to do together (a movie, walk around the park, art gallery, etc). You can DIY or even order pre-made ones. It's a good way to get concrete about making plans together that keeps going through the year. -Mariel

