

Christmas essentials

C O N T E N T S

Foreword

If you believe all the spin, the big-ticket items this Christmas will be the new gaming controllers Kinect and PlayStation Move. Kinect is a hands-free Xbox 360 add-on that combines camera, sensor and microphone that replaces the hand-held game controller. PlayStation Move is a wand-like controller that players swing like a golf club, tennis racquet or sword. There's a wrap-up of gaming consoles and their add-ons in next week's issue (out December 12 with *The Sunday Age*) but in this issue video gaming whiz Mike Wilcox has come up with the 12 best games — plus a classification rating to guide concerned parents. With all the electronic wizardry on the market it's not surprising most of us are confused about where to look and what to buy. Experts Adam Turner and David Hague step in with advice and information — in layman's terms — on smartphones, netbooks, tablets and GPS devices. (Next week we look at speakers, home entertainment, cameras and other electronic gear.) But there's much, much more in this issue than just tech stuff, like our first-ever road test of beauty gifts for women. Hang on to this edition, and issue No. 2, of Christmas Essentials, and you'll be something of a know-all on what's new and what's hot, and it will take the legwork out of your annual pre-Christmas trudge around. Read on ...

Gary LaPersonne, editor



Next week

The toy road test
11 young experts rate their
best and favourite toys

— out Sunday, December 12



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For under \$50

Interesting gifts don't have to cost a fortune. There are heaps of well-priced items available.

A LITTLE bit of sophisticated whimsy goes a long way at Christmas, particularly if you're stuck in a gift-giving cycle with people who are, let's face it, mere acquaintances. There's your second cousin, three times removed; the new girlfriend of your step-uncle; the godson you haven't seen for years until the family re-located back to your neck of the woods just in time for the Christmas reunion.

Working out what to get near-strangers for Christmas can be a real headache — which is where whimsy comes in.

Well-designed, witty gifts with a cute touch (for her) or urban chic (for him) do wonders for breaking the ice. There's also more of a chance that the present will last the distance than if it's straight-out novelty or kitsch.

After all, what are the odds great-aunt Sally will fall on the floor laughing at a couple of rolls

of humorous toilet paper the same way you did?

With the boom in unique design and handmade craft in Australia and abroad, there's a wealth of good ideas to choose from for less than \$50. Elk's simple and stylish fashion accessories take on the hot-air balloon and the cicada as motifs this spring/summer. Flight 001's products make travelling easy and are organised for the jetsetter (we hear American fashion designer and *Project Runway* judge Michael Kors is a fan).

Lark's range takes us back into nanna's kitchen in a sweet remember-when-you-were-little way. Haul's vintage/retro cred is almost too cool for school. Speaking of which, leading stationery stores like kikki.K and Smiggle make it cheerier to go back to the classroom or office after the festivities. Take your pick. You won't disappoint.

MIRANDA TAY

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Store beach essentials in your Goosebumps swimming cap, rrp \$44, from The Design Dispensary.



Fill this Advent calendar with sweets and trinkets, rrp \$49.95, from kikki.K.



Large Grid-It organiser, rrp \$38, holds personal objects in place for travel, from Flight 001.

SunnyLIFE Beach Sounds is a portable, battery-operated radio and MP3 player with an iPod dock, rrp \$49.95.



Cat Rabbit Top Cat earrings, wood and sterling silver, rrp \$40, from Moose: Art for Living.



Mark the growing of your child with this Made 2 Measure yardstick, 1.6cm x 2m, lacquered beech, rrp \$30, from Third Drawer Down.



Slimline leakproof bottles from Contigo — Contigo West Loop, rrp \$29.95, Swish, rrp \$16.95, Hydration, rrp \$19.95.

Sprinkles creates five doughnuts in minutes, rrp \$44.95, from Sunbeam.



Trent Jansen bicycle spoke signs made from recycled road signs, rrp \$35, from Safari Living.

