

## Tech Savvy: 2009 Gift Giving Guide

It's that time again. For those who don't know what to buy a loved one for Christmas, here is the Tech Savvy gift giving guide. This year we're highlighting more than just computers and accessories. On to the list!

The Samsung N510 is not your typical netbook. With an 11.6" screen, Nvidia graphics, and full sized keyboard, it is more like a high power laptop that shrunk in the drier. With 2GB of RAM and a 250GB hard disk and running Microsoft Windows 7 (Home Premium), it doesn't need upgraded right out of the box like a lot of others. This 3 pound wonder runs for about 6 hours on a charge and will set you back \$600. I've got the Samsung NC10, the N510's little brother still available at \$300, and I have been very happy with it. Even at the office it has replaced my desktop computer since I can hook up a full size screen, keyboard, and mouse.

Ever need a little more screen? Working with a graphic program full screen so you can see what you are doing leaves no room for the toolbar. No worries! Plug in the Lilliput Mini USB Monitor, and you have a 7" screen which extends your main screen. These can be found for \$80-100.

USB keyboard, mouse, thumbdrive, camera, iPod screen, light... We run out of ports real quick. A USB hub will allow you to connect more, with anywhere from 4 to 31 ports. These are available from \$8 on up. I use a Rosewill 7 port hub for \$25, but be sure you get the kind with it's own power if it has more than 4 ports.

Amazon's Kindle was a groundbreaking product when it first came out, but the second generation version is cheaper and improved. It can now open PDF files, making it possible to read nearly any electronic document, and with room for 1500 books in memory you can use one to store all kinds of information you need quick access to. The battery lasts for a whole week, and the display is quite readable even in direct sunlight. This \$260 unit also has a "read to me" feature that reads the document to you (handy while driving!). The larger Kindle DX has more features and is available for \$490.

Hike or hunt much? How would you like a little hand held device that lets you track where you have been on Google Maps, let's you check in with loved ones to tell them you are okay, get help from them if you are not, or get emergency response, all with your exact location? While no technology is foolproof, the SPOT personal tracker does all this without the need of a cell phone signal and costs \$100.

With the unusually cold weather, I had to thaw a water line. Bernzomatic makes a new torch about the size, shape, and weight of a small cordless drill. The Quickfire Hand Torch runs on mapgas, and is available for \$80.

Remember the good old days when the brainy kids would blow up the garden shed with a chemistry set? Thames and Kosmos make several science kits where kids can learn the basics of how the universe works. Prices range from \$35-155, garden shed not included.