

# This season's hottest gifts: From practical to luxurious

By Lisa R. Schoolcraft

**H**oliday gifts this year are going to be more practical and more meaningful, trend watchers say.

That's not to say there is no room for luxury. Cashmere, fur — both real and faux — and a new Aston Martin convertible may end up on holiday wish lists, too.

"Even with the economy, people still want [their gifts] to be fun," says Mara Maddox, public relations manager for Bloomingdale's Inc. at Lenox Square and Perimeter Mall. "I think people are investing in products that are fun and useful. And if you are going to give something lux today, it better be practical, too."

This holiday season, the fashion trend will be "anything in fur for women," says Arlene Goldstein, vice president of trend merchandising and fashion director for Belk Inc. in Charlotte, N.C.

Fox fur, rabbit fur, faux fur will be worn in all different ways, she says, from around the neck, to earmuffs, fur on vests and pieces a woman can add on to clothing already owned, she says.

Belk's fox collar is \$165, while the fox earmuffs are \$65.

Accessories also will be big, like the Cole Haan ruby reversible tote for \$198 and Michael Kors-Hamilton large North South tote for \$298.

Metallic items, such as the Michael Kors tote, always are a win for the holidays and will be a trend through the spring, Goldstein says.

"I'm also very excited about leather," Goldstein says. "The tough and tender thing."



The biker jacket is back and leather seems to be a trend for both men's and women's fashions, she says.

People want things that are luxurious, Goldstein says, and there are many items that are affordable.

That's why Maddox says she believes cashmere once again will be a gift and fashion hit this year.

"Cashmere used to be a luxury, almost unattainable," she says. "But not now."

Bloomingdale's carries cashmere sweaters for women around \$99, an item that can be worn at work or on weekends, Maddox says. Cashmere sweaters for men also can be a long-lasting wardrobe staple, she says.

## Corporate trends

On the corporate side, practical also is in.

"The recession may be over, but people will be price-sensitive," says Gwin Hammond, marketing manager for Mori Luggage & Gifts in Atlanta. "We don't think they will be spending as much as previous years, but they are looking for a true value. Not just something inexpensive, but something of true quality and unique and memorable."

Practical, but personal, gifts, such as personalized glassware are a trendy item, she says.

A set of four glasses starts at \$30, which includes engraving.

Leather pad covers for note pads are "a classic business gift that never goes out of style," Hammond says. Mori has a variety ranging in price from \$50 to \$200.

"It's more important than ever to make an impression, and you can't afford to lose a client in this environment,"

says Robanne Schulman, president of Plaid Monkey Inc., a personal and corporate shopper in Atlanta. "Be more personal with gifts and really think about the person you are giving it to."

Bloomingdale's cashmere sweaters

## 10 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PERFECT PRESENT

**A**tanta "gift guru" Robyn Spizman, chief gift officer at TheGiftionary.com, a free online gift-giving guide, provided Living in Atlanta with 10 gift ideas.



- 1. Gifts that keep on giving.** Volunteer time or make a donation to a client's favorite charity or nonprofit.
- 2. Incredible edibles.** Send food from Atlanta or the Southeast. (See "Price Tag," Page 7.)
- 3. Play it safe.** Give a weather radio or solar flashlights that work without batteries. "There are also many other safety gifts for people who commute or fly a great deal," she says.
- 4. Gift cards.** Consider gift cards for anything that can be consumed, including gasoline or coffee.
- 5. Express gratitude to clients.** One idea is for a gift from Voice Quilt, with a personalized voice-recorded message in a box, Spizman says.
- 6. Make it personal.** Spizman says a company such as [www.americanpersonalizedproducts.com](http://www.americanpersonalizedproducts.com) can provide a personalized fireplace grate with the client's name.
- 7. Think small.** "Compact umbrellas are inexpensive and can fit in a briefcase or handbag," Spizman says. Other ideas are small desktop photo frames.
- 8. On the go.** "If the business does a lot of traveling, think travel earphones, personalized blankets or travel pillows," she says.
- 9. Gifts of value.** Give something the client values outside of work. "If they have kids, give a gift that they all can enjoy," Spizman says. She suggests a basket of games and popcorn, tickets to a special play or show, a zoo or museum membership.
- 10. Home-grown pride.** "Show your Atlanta spirit," she says. "If you have a house in Blue Ridge, give a gift from there. She suggests a candle from [rhapsodyinblueridge.com](http://rhapsodyinblueridge.com).

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