

## Gift Guide: High-tech happiness for \$100 or less

December 4 2009, By JESSICA MINTZ , AP Technology Writer

---



In this Oct. 23, 2009 file photo, the Apple "Magic Mouse" is seen at the Apple Store in San Francisco. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

(AP) -- No one's going to blame you for keeping holiday gifts minimal this year. But if you want to round out your handmade cards, scarves, pickles and jam with a gadget or gizmo, here are a handful of our \$100-and-under favorites.

---

Wii MotionPlus accessory for Nintendo Wii (\$20, or \$50 with a game, available at [bestbuy.com](http://bestbuy.com) and elsewhere)

For many families, "Wii Sports," the game that's been bundled with the [Nintendo Wii](#) since its 2006 launch, remains a favorite. By letting people

swing a controller to play virtual rounds of bowling, golf, tennis, baseball and boxing, it has changed how we play video games and made more of us into gamers.

The Wii MotionPlus is an attachment for the original "Wiimote" controller. The MotionPlus makes the motion-sensing controls more sensitive and precise, so a flick of a wrist can turn your virtual tennis racket and spin your bowling ball. If your gift recipient doesn't already own "[Wii Sports Resort](#)," it's worth throwing that in, too - it adds frisbee-throwing with a dog, water-scooter racing, sword fighting and other new games and comes with one MotionPlus attachment.

---

Roku SD Netflix Player (\$80, [roku.com](http://roku.com))

If someone you know uses Netflix, he or she needs Roku. In less than five minutes, I had this little black box plugged in to my television, connected to the Wi-Fi in my home and synched to my Netflix queue.

Netflix lets members who pay at least \$9 per month stream more than 17,000 movies and TV shows using Roku or a computer, and the list is growing. I still had to use my computer to add new titles to my queue, but it was easy to scroll through them on the [TV screen](#) and pick something to watch.

The Roku SD is \$20 less than the original model. It would be a good bet for someone like me, who still has an old-school boxy television. By the time I get a flat-screen TV, this kind of feature will come built in. If you're shopping for someone who already has a house full of high-definition TVs, this isn't the right Roku. Instead, pick the \$100 Roku HD, which can stream high-def video, or the \$130 Roku HD-XR, which uses the latest Wi-Fi technology to send that video to farther-away TVs

in the house.

---

WikiReader (\$99, [thewikireader.com](http://thewikireader.com))

This pocketable gadget contains nearly all of the text of Wikipedia, the online community-built encyclopedia, and displays it on a monochrome LCD. It works anywhere, and can be updated through downloads every few months.

Using the WikiReader is faster than searching Wikipedia on a cell phone. Too bad the WikiReader's on-screen keyboard makes it difficult to type search terms, and scrolling through long entries is slow. Wikipedia's images and tables are missing. Still, a cool gift for the curious. Comes with two AAA batteries, which Openmoko Inc., the gadget's maker, says will power the reader for about a year.

---

Magic Mouse for Macs (\$69, [store.apple.com](http://store.apple.com))

Apple's new wireless mouse comes nestled in a clear case like some artifact in an alien museum. It's flatter than most mice, which is nice for my small hands. It also has no buttons or wheels, just a shiny white surface that clicks and responds to various fingertip gestures.

It took three software updates and reboots to get my iMac and mouse working together. Once that was done, I found it intuitive to use gestures for scrolling and panning: Just drag one finger across the surface of the mouse, in any direction.

I still haven't mastered the "two-finger swipe," a side-to-side gesture that

can mean "go back" or "go forward" in programs such as Web browsers or digital photo collections. The movement is uncomfortable and the mouse keeps creeping to one side under my fingertips.

This is a good-looking addition to my desktop setup at home, though it isn't a revolution. Buy it for die-hard Apple fans who love bragging about their latest iGadget.

---

Avid M-Audio Studiophile AV 30 and LaCie Sound2 computer speakers (\$100 for either set, [m-audio.com](http://m-audio.com); [lacie.com](http://lacie.com))

Playing music at any significant volume on built-in computer speakers gives me a headache - the desk seems to vibrate with the tinny racket. I'm no audiophile, but these speaker sets allowed me to enjoy listening to music in my home office again.

The minimalist black-and-white LaCie set looks more at home with my iMac. It's also capable of drawing power from the computer over a USB connection if an outlet isn't available. But to my amateur ears, the blockier black M-Audio ones sounded richer.

---

"FAIL Nation: A Visual Romp Through the World of Epic Fails" (\$12, in bookstores)

The Web-trend connoisseur will recognize the source of this book, 2-year-old [failblog.org](http://failblog.org), as the online pictorial compendium of things going horribly wrong. Even technophobes should be amused by the bloopers and awkward wordings captured in this slim volume, published in October by Harper Paperbacks.

The book reprints more than 100 of the Failblog's reader-submitted photos. Marvel at signs that say "keep right" while pointing left, or that direct diners to the "drive-thur." Snort at the ATM that asks you to withdraw multiples of \$20 - to a maximum of \$250. And so on.

The blog is run by Pet Holdings Inc., the same folks who brought you LOLcats, the art of writing funny captions for amateur cat photos (see [icanhascheezburger.com](http://icanhascheezburger.com)).

---

Tiny tripods (\$10-\$20)

Spontaneous group photos are better when one person isn't stuck holding the camera. The Bottle Cap Tripod from Dynamighty Design Inc. (\$10, [dynamighty.com](http://dynamighty.com)) has a rubbery base that stuck perfectly on top of a wine bottle and a maple syrup container, although it was wobbly atop a bottle of Perrier. It's common for cameras to have a hole on the bottom that screws onto tripods; I attached my point-and-shoot, tilted to get the right angle and set off the timer. Perfect.

The Manfrotto Modo Pocket (\$20, [bhphotovideo.com](http://bhphotovideo.com) and elsewhere) is tabletop tripod that, when folded flat, is about half the size of a business card in length and width. Unfolded, it has four rubber-coated feet that grip nicely to most surfaces, and in the center, a threaded screw that works with digital cameras up to 17 ounces.

---

LaCie iamaKey USB flash drive (\$22-\$100, [lacie.com](http://lacie.com))

Most USB drives are ugly and easy to lose. This one caught my eye because it looks like a key, which makes it at home on my key chain (it's

smaller than my car key) and LaCie says the part that sticks into the computer is water- and scratch-resistant. The iamaKey comes in four sizes, from 4 gigabytes to 32 gigabytes, and works on both Macs and Windows PCs.

*©2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.*

Citation: Gift Guide: High-tech happiness for \$100 or less (2009, December 4) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-12-gift-high-tech-happiness.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.