

New generation is making the holidays mobile

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It's getting hard to keep Christmas gifts a secret these days. Last year, [Twitter posts](#) revealed what President Obama was buying for his daughters a few days early.

That's not the only way that [new technology](#) is changing the holidays.

Lisa Fall, associate professor of advertising and public relations, said she is amazed by the way the Internet and smartphones make planning

holiday celebrations and keeping in touch easier.

"We didn't have any of this technology growing up," she said.

Social media sites offer tips for meal preparation. Instead of calling the Butterball hotline, you can watch a [YouTube](#) video on how to cook a turkey—or just about anything else. Instead of borrowing your grandmother's casserole recipe, you can look one up in the [Food and Drink](#) section on Pinterest or on sites like [All Recipes](#) and [Yummly](#), which include reviews, ratings, and nutrition information for each recipe.

"My students have less skills learned from their families, and so maybe using media that they are comfortable with to learn is a great idea," said Carol Costello, professor of retail, hospitality and tourism management. "Last week, a student came up to me with green onions in one hand and parsley in the other and asked me which was the celery."

If you need help with decorating, Pinterest can help with that, too. Its [holiday section](#) has tips for lighting, ornament making, gingerbread-house building—everything.

"Pinterest is huge," Fall said. "My sixteen-year-old has gone into Pinterest to find things she wants to do for her party."

Limbia has released a [Christmas List app](#) to help with all aspect of holiday shopping, in case you can't keep up with budgeting on your own. Of course there are also various [travel apps](#) that do everything from navigating traffic jams to locating the nearest cheap gas station.

But maybe the biggest change is the way people are keeping in touch with each other when they can't be together for the holidays.

Fall said that [Snapchat](#)—an app that lets you chat with pictures—is a popular way for people to keep in touch now.

It's perfect, she says, "if you want to send pictures of you and your family across the country—of hey, I'm here at this party, my baby met Santa for the first time."

[Skype and the USO](#) have teamed up to provide free video or phone calls to military personnel at any Asia-Pacific USO center. They're also serving "virtual holiday dinners" so service members can eat holiday meals with their families via video chat.

Elizabeth Hendrickson, professor of journalism and electronic media, says she thinks a younger generation of service members is embracing that technology.

"If you consider the age of many military servicemen and women with young families, they are a demographic that has grown up with pretty rapid technological innovation," she said. "They are comfortable with mobile technology, and as such, are likely to be more open to the USO's offer."

For civilians, there are [apps](#), [Wi-Fi hotspots](#), and [ecards](#) to keep you virtually connected to family and friends you can't see during the [holiday](#) season.

Provided by University of Tennessee at Knoxville

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