

# Valentine's Day gift-giving strategy for the hopeless romantic

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University of Cincinnati research shows that thoughtful gift givers' desire to show off just how well they know their partner could backfire. (Paul Cross/Flickr)

A little advice on shopping for your valentine: When aiming Cupid's bow, you don't need a perfect bull's eye to score points with your sweetheart.

Just get that arrow somewhere on the target.

Research on gift giving from the University of Cincinnati shows that thoughtful lovers' burning desire to show off just how well they know their partner could get them burnt. So instead, think romantically, but shop for versatility.

"When it comes to choosing gifts for close others, like [romantic partners](#), givers try especially hard to be thoughtful and demonstrate their knowledge of their partner," says Mary Steffel, researcher and assistant professor of marketing in UC's Carl H. Lindner College of Business. "Ironically, these attempts to be thoughtful can backfire: We find that givers tend to choose more specific, less versatile gift cards when shopping for romantic partners than friends, but that recipients prefer more versatile gift cards regardless of how close they are to the giver."

Steffel's research team will present "Giver-Recipient Discrepancies Contribute to Gift Card Non-Redemption: Givers Choose Personalized but More-Restrictive and Less-Preferred Gift Cards" at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology annual conference to be held Feb. 26-28 in Long Beach, California.

The research features data analysis from multiple experiments where participants were asked to put themselves in the role of a giver or recipient and then choose between gift cards that varied in terms of specificity or versatility. Steffel and her team also incorporated real-world data from multiple gift card services, such as Giftly, into their research. The results showed a giver's preference for personalization often worked against him or her.

"Recipients took longer to redeem [gift cards](#) the more specific they were," Steffel says. "Givers didn't anticipate this. They thought it would take recipients equally long to redeem regardless of how specific they were."

[Steffel had related research published](#) in a spring issue of the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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