Still need to buy a gift? Here are some last minute digital essentials

The holidays are just days away, and if you haven't mapped out your plan of attack for gift-getting, it might be too late to ship everything on your family or friend's wishlist — at least without paying dearly for shipping costs. However, don't forget about digital gifts. While some might miss having a box to open on the holidays, the big upsides to opting for digital gifts is that they're easy to buy, sometimes more affordable to acquire than physical versions, and best of all, they arrive instantly.

Here are a few ideas (okay, there's actually a lot of ideas) for digital gifts to round out your bounty this holiday season.

These cash-equivalent gifts aren't the most inspired, but there's no denying that having extra credit to use for purchases at the likes of Amazon or Best Buy is a nice feeling. One of my favorite post-holiday traditions is buying something that I absolutely do not need, and having a bit of a buffer with store credit keeps me from feeling so bad about it.

Photo by Amelia Holowaty Krales / The Verge

Google and Apple each sell gift cards to their digital stores, the Google Play Store and iTunes / App Store. You'll probably get the most out of a gift card for the platform that your phone or tablet is built on, though you can still get some use out of them if you get them mixed up. For example, in addition to games and apps, Google Play Store gift cards let you rent

movies on Google Play Movies & TV, an app that works on Android, iOS, PC, and macOS. The same can be said for iTunes and App Store gift cards. You can purchase a movie on iTunes and play it back on a Windows PC or an Android device.

Microsoft also makes gift cards that can be redeemed on the Microsoft Store for apps, movies, music, or games. Some of this content is available outside of the PC realm, just make sure to check before you redeem your gift card.

Best for Android phones / tablets, Android TV gear, Chromebooks

Google Play Store gift card (Buy one gift card, get the second one of lesser value for 20 percent off at Best Buy)

Best for iPhones, iPod Touch, iPads, Macs, Apple TV

iTunes and App Store gift card ($40 will get you a $50 gift card at Walmart)

Best for Windows PCs

Microsoft Store and Xbox gift card (don’t sweat on which to buy, they can be used for Xbox or PC purchases interchangeably)

Whether it’s done on a phone or game console, gaming is increasingly leaning on subscriptions or microtransactions (i.e. *Fortnite* V-Bucks) to let gamers squeeze out the most enjoyment. A gift card for your loved one’s platform of choice will allow them to enjoy games more and worry less about the payment roadblocks.

Xbox One S

Photo by Tyler Pina / The Verge

Xbox One



Photo by Amelia Holowaty Krales / The Verge

PS4 / PS4 Pro

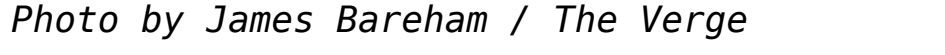


Photo by James Bareham / The Verge

Nintendo Switch

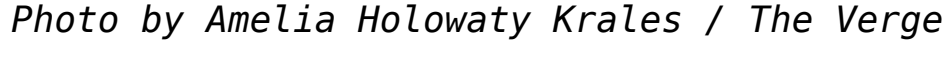


Photo by Amelia Holowaty Krales / The Verge

PC

- Steam gift card (sending digitally requires your own Steam account, or else physical gift cards are the only option)
- Blizzard Battle.net gift card (the PC client used for *Overwatch*, *World of Warcraft*, *Destiny 2*, *Call of Duty: Black Ops 4*, and more)

If your loved one has been suffering through ads on the free-tier of a music streaming service, a gift card can bump them up to a premium subscription. And once you go premium, it’s really tough to go back.

Buying the right gift card for the cord cutter in your life can be a tricky task, since there are so many avenues for watching television without the need for a cable box. Thankfully, there’s a lot of overlap in terms of what’s offered by each service, so shooting in the dark isn’t as bad as you’d think. Though, some sporting events and series found

on Hulu, Netflix, HBO Now and others, are exclusive to those platforms, so ask someone close to who you're buying for to ensure that you're making the best purchase.

If you're really not sure where to turn, check out *The Verge*'s comprehensive guide to cord-cutting in 2018.

https://www.theverge.com/good-deals/2018/12/21/18151497/gift-card-subscription-digital-gifts-last-minute-holiday