The silly word game you didn’t know you needed

Hi, friends! Welcome to *Installer* No. 15, your guide to the best and *Verge*-iest stuff in the world. (If you’re new here, hello, sorry in advance for all my terrible jokes, and also, you can read all the old editions at the *Installer* homepage.)

I also have for you a new webcam, a new word game, a new show about monsters, a new iMessage hack, and a whole bunch more. Oh, and a favor to ask: we’re doing a survey on how people use *The Verge* and what you might want from a “*Verge* subscription.” If you have thoughts and are up for helping us out, please take a second to **fill out the survey**. Thanks in advance!

We’re off next week for a Thanksgiving break, so I hope you all get a wonderful and restful break, and I hope there’s enough here to keep you busy for a couple of weeks.

And of course, the best part of *Installer* is your ideas and tips. If you find a new app this week, discover a new podcast, crack open a new book, build a new *Minecraft* world, or anything else, I want to hear about it. Tell me everything: installer@theverge.com. And if you know someone else who might enjoy *Installer*, forward it to them, and tell them to subscribe here.

Alright, lots of fun stuff this week. Let’s dive in.

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franklin [&>a]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-white”>Deep dive

It’s gift guide season! Friends, I will not lie to you, I *love* a good gift guide. And the niche-ier and weirder the better. It’s also about to be Black Friday, though Black Friday sales are starting earlier than ever this year. Deals for everybody! But shopping on the internet is somehow more confusing and complicated than ever, so I figured it might be a good time to dig in a bit on a few simple tricks I’ve found for deal hunting and gift searching.

First, a few thoughts on how to look at gift guides:

- **Start with *The Verge*!** Sorry, sorry, some ruthless self-promotion here to start. But we work really hard on deal roundups and gift guides, so be sure and check ’em all out. I particularly like our **digital gift guide**, our **under-$50 guide**, and (my personal fave this year) the **For Dads guide**. We’re also already deep into Black Friday, and have **a big guide** of the best deals this year.
- **Only trust obviously human-made guides.** If you see a guide that’s mostly populated by quotes from Amazon reviews, written by ChatGPT, or pulled from product listings, run the other way. A better way to start is by going to websites you already trust. Personally, I’ve found ***Gear Patrol* also does a good job** with buying and gift guides, ***Wirecutter* rarely steers me wrong**, and I’ve found a *lot* of **good kitchen gadgets from our friends over at *Eater***. Oh, and **nobody finds weird gifts like *BuzzFeed* does**.
- **You can always deal-shop old recommendations. *A Thing or Two*** is one of my favorite sources of product recommendations, and their **Secret Menu archive** is just a

long list of cool stuff to buy. Tina Roth-Eisenberg over at Swissmiss keeps **a running list of gift-guide-y products** every year, and every year, I scroll through the archive and end up buying a couple. Holiday-specific guides are often less useful than lists of cool stuff that someone made just because they're excited about the stuff.

- **You have to comparison shop yourself.** All the price-comparison tools out there suck and are compromised in one way or another. Even the prices that show up in search previews often aren't the real price! This is the most manual and annoying part of the process, but there's really no shortcut.

So far, my advice is just "don't trust the internet," basically. But here are also a few tools worth installing or keeping open in a tab as you shop:

- **Camelcamelcamel.** Sales prices are lies — you'd be amazed how often they're like, "20% off!" except it has never once actually cost that full price. Camelcamelcamel is a price tracker for Amazon, and it'll show you whether the thing you're about to buy might actually be cheaper some other time. The browser extension is the most convenient way to use it, but I like just using the website.
- **.** I've spent a lot of time Googling, like, "Bose coupon codes" and then trying 100 coupon codes that never work. At least in my experience, this is a total waste of time. The Honey browser extension automates the coupon hunting, so if there is a deal out there, it'll find it for you. It doesn't always find the *best* possible deal, but it's good enough and a lot less annoying than cutting and pasting all those codes. (I've also heard good things about , but I haven't used it personally.)
- **Fakespot.** You really can't trust most online product reviews anymore, you know? There are the obviously paid-for ones, the obviously AI ones, and then just a stream

of less obvious but equally sketchy reviews on everything everywhere. Fakespot does a pretty good job of filtering out the fake stuff and up-ranking the human reviews, which is particularly helpful when you're on Amazon deciding between two brands you've never heard of.

My most important piece of advice here is to never just Google the name of a product and buy from whatever shopping listing is the cheapest. That's how you turn into me, buying a (fake) Dyson Airwrap from a (fake) Shopify store like a moron. Shopping search in general is a gameable, ugly ecosystem that often won't lead you to good products at good prices. Instead, pick a site or a person whose taste you trust, do some research, and cross your fingers for a coupon code.

Oh, and always, always, always check return policies. People get weird about returns during the holidays.

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Here's what the Installer *community is into this week. I want to know what you're into right now as well! Email installer@theverge.com with your recommendations for anything and everything, and we'll feature some of our favorites here every week.*

"***The Big Dig***! Some of the best reporting and narrative nonfiction audio I've heard in a long time. I'm rationing the episodes so I can savor each one." — Christine

". It's an iOS app for using Siri Shortcuts to interact with

Google Sheets. I thought to share it when *Installer* mentioned tracking finances in Google Sheets, as it's how I track finances. I even have automations set up so whenever I get a text that my credit card wasn't present, it logs the charge, and I am looking into one for Apple Pay." – Brad

"I've really been loving this app, **Elfster**, to manage my family's and work's gift exchanges. It's clean and easy to use!" – John

"I've really been enjoying ***Apex Legends***' new limited-time mode: Three Strikes. It's like *Warzone*'s Resurgence mode, where you get 3x lives, redeploying with all your loot and weapons. It's a high-octane (pun intended), hectic, lovely mess. Super refreshing." – Sentinelite

". This game is flying under the radar right now. Amazing soundtrack, fun gameplay, lots of tracks and cars, great for Steam Deck or other portable PCs as well. Did I mention the soundtrack? Because it smacks." – Alan

"For people who are into bartending, I cannot recommend **Highball** enough – it might be somewhat old, but the design is gorgeous, and it is great to keep track of all your favorite drinks." – Evgeny

"***A Murder at the End of the World*** on Hulu / FX. Fun, dark mystery from the *OA* team that blends vibes of [David] Fincher's *Dragon Tattoo* and the remote unhinged tech billionaire vibes of *Glass Onion* with a side helping of AI, smart homes, wearable tech, and Reddit true-crime sleuthing weirdos." – Wheat

"The latest in *The Murderbot Diaries* series of (mostly) novellas is out this week: ***System Collapse***. While I just started today, I will probably finish by the time you publish. The entire series is hilarious, entertaining, and all-around fantastic!" – Jason

“If it’s an older classic book, I’m reading it in **Serial Reader**. The app splits up books into small chunks and sends you a new one each day. Each day’s section is pretty short, like 10–20 minutes, which is perfect for me to sneak in some reading over breakfast before work. I’ve managed to get through a bunch of classics I’ve been meaning to read for years — I’m starting *Middlemarch* next.” — Jay

“***Halo Infinite*** brought back a classic playlist of *Halo 3* maps from 2007, and it’s giving me life.” — Jason