



Holiday Gift Ideas

It's hard to believe, but the holiday season is right around the corner. If you want to give the gift of financial literacy, there are some great options.

For Youngsters

Our recommendation for young kids is the Money Savvy Pig, a piggybank (and teaching tool) sold by Money Savvy Generation (www.msgen.com). This is more than just your basic piggybank. For starters, the pig is see-through, which means kids can easily track their progress. But more importantly, the pig is divided into four slots -- one for saving, one for spending, one for donating, and one for investing -- which easily facilitates discussions about the various uses of money (the only major category missing is debt payments, which hopefully come much later in life!).

For Adults (those just starting out, and the rest of us)

Keeping your financial records organized can be a challenge, but it's well worth doing; as we all know, getting organized is the first step to gaining control over any task. To that end, we give all of our new clients a copy of the Homefile Organizer (available at www.homefileorganizer.com). The Homefile is a system of manila folder-sized index cards, which you use to organize your manila file folders. Each card contains three pieces of information: what to file behind this card, what not to file behind this card, and when these records can be disposed of. The last item is the most valuable by far, as it answers the perennial question: how long do I have to keep this?

Along the same lines, consider gifting a shredder. Prosaic, yes, but every household needs one.

Another great gift idea is a subscription to the venerable Consumer Reports. If you're not familiar with Consumer Reports, it's a magazine (both paper and online) that tests products and makes buying recommendations on everything from cars to appliances to store rewards cards. The magazine is published by the non-profit Consumers Union, whose stated mission is to help consumers "distinguish hype from fact and good products from bad ones". This is a particularly useful gift for younger people who are creating a home and making all the major purchases that go with that. An online subscription is \$26/year.

And finally, a few book recommendations:

- *The Big Short*, by Michael Lewis. Lewis is the author of many best-selling non-fiction books, including *Liar's Poker* and *Moneyball*. I'm not a baseball fan, and the last thing I would normally pick up is a book about baseball; nonetheless, I devoured *Moneyball*. Substitute the financial crisis for baseball, and you've got *The Big Short* -- a book about the financial crisis for people who think they don't want to read a book about the crisis.
- Our favorite personal finance writer is Jane Bryant Quinn, and her latest book is a revision of her classic: *Making the Most of Your Money Now*. At 1,264 pages, this is good fit for the reader who is hungry for a comprehensive guide to personal financial management. For a shortcut, we suggest a book she published a few years ago: *Smart and Simple Financial Strategies for Busy People*, which gets quickly to the point on all the major financial decisions we face, and comes in at a much briefer 256 pages. Both are highly recommended.

-- Therese Govern. Posted 11/15/11.