



Don't Screw The Pooch At Christmas

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The most important relationship a person can have in this world is with a dog. It's true, ask any dog. It'll probably either bark in agreement or look at you like you're crazy for asking such a dumb question, you moron. And at no time is that relationship in greater peril than at Christmas.

Choosing the wrong present for your dog can cause Mr. Sniffy to stop loving you. No more face licking, no more sitting on your lap, no more using your pillow as a sex toy. Just icy stairs and sighs of depression.

So to keep you from suffering such humiliation and depression yourself, I offer you this primer on how to choose the right present for your dog. Two issues are paramount in getting this right: First, you must consider the dog's size, breed and personality when choosing the right gift. Second, don't buy anything predictable like a bone or a chew toy. They're looking for something original, dammit! Show some effort!

For instance, one toy that's universal to all dogs is a remote-controlled car. They just love driving those things around. Keep in mind, however, that if you get one of these for your dog, you should also set up a little course with miniature orange cones for him to maneuver the car through, as this makes it more fun. Also, you are responsible for fishing the car out from under the couch, even if Sir Barks-A-Lot sends it under there 20 times in a row. Remember, we're not doing this to go halfway.

If you don't have the money for batteries, or you don't love your dog enough to buy a remote-controlled car, here are some other options for a cold-hearted cheapskate: Small dogs generally prefer a gift that makes them seem classy, like a humidor or a monocle. Large dogs enjoy jigsaw puzzles that show a picture of a seal having dinner with light bulb. They're crazy for it, trust me. Medium-sized dogs are the hardest to shop for. They expect to be flattered, but want something practical as well, like a talking mirror that pays them compliments, or a Greek salad topped with gyros meat (where the meat has been arranged to read, "You're special!").

Certain breeds have particular proclivities. Poodles are into Tennyson's early work, and enjoy anything by Orwell. (Hey, I'm as surprised as you are.) Cocker spaniels enjoy a good laugh, so a gift certificate to the Spaghetti Warehouse or a hobo's sack will keep them happy. Dachshunds favor

miniature walking sticks topped with a gold ball, and also have been known to enjoy being named President for the Day at pretzel bakeries. German shepherds often describe their perfect day as spent playing Tetris. And you will earn the undying love of your beagle, Pickles, if you get him a pony to ride.

If you have a nervous dog, some of that new inhalable alcohol is probably a good idea. Try the scotch. In contrast, lazy dogs like perpetual motion machines, as it gives them something to look at. What you don't realize, though, is that they're also giggling on the inside.

In the end, what I think you'll find is that it isn't the way the present is wrapped, or what it tastes like, or how easy it is to carry into your bed that will make all the difference to your pup—it's the thought that counts. Just don't screw up. Also, don't dress like Santa for your dogs. It freaks out little Peaches 'n' Herb, and they're apt to pee all over the tree.