



LAST-MINUTE STOCKING STUFFERS

It's Christmas Eve, and your stockings aren't yet hung by the chimney with care. If you find yourself in need of last-minute gifts, look no further than your neighborhood dollar store. For \$10, you can find plenty of tiny treasures to put in any family member's sock this Christmas. Patriot-News staffers Caitlin West, Abby Rhoad and Stephanie Sadowski share what they would put in their Christmas stockings with \$10.

CAITLIN'S STOCKING

We put so much thought into each gift we give, from making lists like Santa to courting the best deals and carefully wrapping and placing each one under the tree, that sometimes stocking stuffers become an afterthought.

But even last-minute stocking stuffers should, and can, reflect the interests of the person receiving them (so put down the floss and pens, desperate shoppers). I picked some items I wouldn't mind finding on Christmas morning — things I actually would use around the house and that would bring me joy.

My stocking starts with some kitchen supplies: a box of Betty Crocker cake mix and Christmas cupcake wrappers, a Betty Crocker spatula to help make the cupcakes and a festive oven mitten and matching set of hot pads. Then I added some shower gel, a shower scrubber and a candle, so the baker can relax after making all of those delicious cupcakes.

Lastly are a couple of bags of chocolate, because every stocking needs candy. It's Christmas law. Merry Christmas, and may your friends and family share some cupcakes with you in the new year.



- » Candle
- » Shower scrubber
- » Shower gel
- » Spatula
- » Cake mix
- » Cupcake liners
- » Oven mitt
- » Set of two hot pads
- » Bag of chocolate caramel candy
- » Bag of cookies-and-crème patties

ABBY'S STOCKING

In my family, stockings are filled with those extra little silly things. When we were kids, my brother and I would get toothbrushes in our favorite colors or soap in the shape of dinosaurs. I would often find an assortment of stationery and different flavored Chapsticks in my stocking.

Probably the most practical gift-giver you'll ever meet, I tried to find the most useful stocking stuffers.

I found several stationery accessories, including a mininotebook that's perfect for the journalist on the go, several embellished paperclips and a chevron-patterned note holder.

I also included items for the holiday — fluffy socks to be worn on Christmas morning and a head massager to be used after Christmas Day — as well as some Carmex lip balm for the winter months and a package of milkshake straws with spoons on the end. I threw in a box of Sno-Caps because, well, candy.

Last but not least, I added a pickle ornament because I love pickles. Little did I know there's actually a story behind it.



- » Post-It Notes and holder
- » Fluffy socks
- » Head massager
- » Paper clips
- » Fancy clothes pins
- » Pickle ornament
- » Carmex
- » Small notebook
- » Spoon straws
- » Snow-Caps candy

STEPHANIE'S STOCKING

My stocking isn't the most practical one you'll find this year, but then, I'm not the most practical person.

I love Christmas. I love the sharing and giving and the message of love. But I also love the glitter! I have two girls, 7 and 4, and our Christmas tree is rainbow-colored ornaments and fairies. It's terrific.

In that vein, most of the things I chose are shiny: glitter glue, sparkly nail art, a silver LED candle that changes to rainbow colors, shiny green jingle bells.

There are a few frivolous items, including candy canes on a headband, which the girls will love. I rounded it out with two festive yet useful items — a snowflake mug and a red-capped wine sippie cup — and a pair of tongs. I really need some kitchen tongs.

I almost forgot — a pair of glittery silver reindeer, looking haughty and fancy. I've named them Prancer and Vixen.

The beauty of the Christmas stocking is that suddenly this random assortment makes sense. Merry Christmas, happy new year, and may all your hopes come to life.



- » Mug
- » Wine sippie cup
- » Bells
- » Reindeer ornaments
- » Glitter glue
- » Glitter nail set
- » Tongs
- » Silver LED candle
- » Candy cane headband
- » Pickle ornament

Short on time, big on ideas: last-minute gifts



You slept through Black Friday and missed Cyber Monday. Even overnight shipping can't save you at this point. But you still need gifts for several people on your list. You could brave the rest of the last-minute shoppers at the mall or hand out empty boxes with IOUs. Instead, go beyond the gift cards with thoughtful last-minute gifts. These ideas will have your loved ones thanking you for your generosity and creativity.

— Compiled by Abby Rhoad, arhoad@pennlive.com

21st-century mixtape

» While mixtapes are a small piece of history that seem to have been forgotten, they are still a great, personal gift that can be tailored to any recipient. Personalize a CD or iPod playlist with your recipient's favorite songs. The list could be a mix of your favorite Christmas covers or songs that remind you of that special someone. Or offer a mix of music they love with new bands they might not be familiar with.

Movie, music, book or television subscription service

» The presents have been unwrapped, and the family has been staring at one another for an hour. Why not activate that Netflix subscription you got your brother or sister-in-law? Or you could cover your dad's audio book habit for a few months (or the whole year). Consider signing your recipient up for one of the many online subscription

ABOUT THE CHRISTMAS PICKLE

According to German tradition, a small pickle ornament is hidden deep within the branches of the Christmas tree after the other ornaments have been hung — tucked out of sight, making it difficult to find. On Christmas morning, the first family member to spot the pickle is rewarded with a special blessing for the coming year and receives the first present from under the tree. The pickle is also said to bring good luck for the whole year.

