

Devon's Secret Services

Hi-Tech

Holiday Ideas

I have a confession to make—I am a gadget junkie! I am powerless over every new, cutting-edge hi-tech gadget that comes on the market—and though I definitely like fun for fun's sake, my family and I need our gadgets to be useful. So when it came time to uncover cool holiday gifts and write the new hot products in our "wonderful wired world", I couldn't wait to jump in!

For this holiday season, I discovered some great hi-tech gift ideas that are not only smart and fun, but will give you peace of mind with respect to some real safety concerns when it comes to your kids.

Before shopping, make sure to follow "Devon's Secret Service's" Shopping Tips:

1. Do your own research and then shop around for the best price. www.CNET.com is my favorite site to compare features and pricing.
2. Online retailers do the best job of satisfying those who know exactly what they want. In those cases, you'll find the lowest prices and best selection on these sites.
3. Brick and mortar retailers typically are better if you want to see firsthand how a product works and need education and customer service.
4. Use a professional installer for larger items and complicated systems, and be sure to ask for a protection/disaster recovery plan for all home computer systems.

Let's start with one of the most talked about areas — Kids and the internet.

My thirteen year old and her friends are online for hours each evening and it tends to drive me CRAZY. I have rules, monitor usage and take away the privilege when I need to, but I still struggle. BFG Technologies to the rescue! Their Internet Traffic Cop device www.trafficcop.com gives me control and

peace of mind. The idea behind this is simple — it allows me to disconnect the PC from the internet without having to turn off the computer. The product is attractive and small and fits nicely on your desk (or hidden from your teenager.) I am a big fan because otherwise I find myself yanking out plugs, and then worry that I might break something or not be able to reconnect when needed. The Traffic Cop is available for \$49.99 at Best Buy and Comp USA.

If your teenager surfs on a laptop or you're not able to keep as close an eye as you might like, I strongly recommend a software package like NetNanny.com (www.NetNanny.com) which will block a range of content you don't want them visiting. While this is not a brand new product, child safety is so



FROM "THE PINK BOOK"

important I feel the need to recommend this product for the holiday season. They offer a trial period for free, as well as a lot of educational information on internet safety, protecting your kids from online predators of all sorts. A great tool.

Another great gift is the "Wherifone" a child-friendly phone, email and SMS Device with a GPS tracking/locator capability built, allowing parents and kids to communicate without having full cell phone services. Wherifones can be programmed with up to 20 phone numbers, so not only can your children call you but also their best friends, trusted neighbors and other family members if they can't reach you. The Wherifone is available at Amazon.com.

Want to add a GPS tracking device to an existing phone or the car your teenager drives? Brick House Security (www.BrickHouseSecurity.com) sells small wireless devices that use GPS technology to monitor the movement of people and things and help you know exactly where you and they are at all times. These devices can be placed inside a cell phone, car, backpack or anything else. They are expensive—starting at \$280.00— but can you really place a price on safety? Especially for parents of teens—this is an invaluable product!



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Now let's talk about just plain cool stuff. Guess what color is hot for holiday gadgets? You guessed it. Hot pink. Iced Out Gear (www.icedoutgear.com) has a belt buckle with a scrolling Pink LED for \$49.99. For those of you non techies, that's a programmable digital scrolling sign on your belt in hot pink! I can see my daughter's now: "You Rock!"

There also is the ultra Hot Pink Motorola RAZR (www.motorola.com), a definite bonus to one of the coolest phones out there, though at \$350+ I'm only buying one—for myself! A great gadget for a great price is the Pink IDog (\$39) for your resident iPod user and Pink MP3 Players available at AudioCubes (www.audiocubes.com).

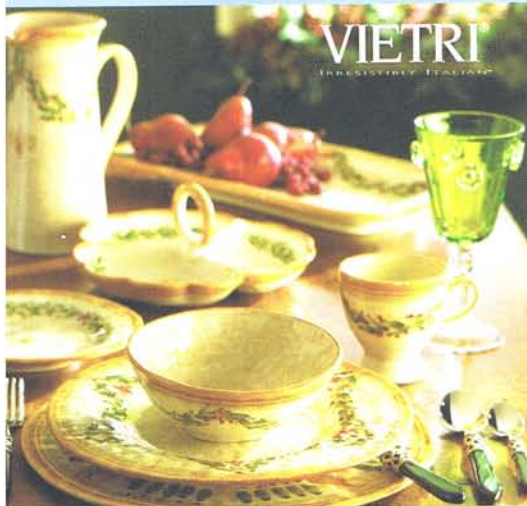
My next FAV gadget is from Think-Geek.com (don't you just love the name?) They offer a French made "Smart Bunny" which can teach you tai chi, read your e-mail, report the weather or stock market, pull RSS feeds and tell you the time. Talk about smart technology—plus he can also do tricks! Nabaztag (as his "friends" call him) can move his ears, play music, talk and whistle, and his body can show off hundreds of colors and special patterns



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FROM "THE PINK BOOK"

of light. Sometimes he will even have his own random things to say, just know that you'll have to put up with his changing moods. Nabaztag WiFi Smart Bunny is \$149.99 at ThinkGeek.com.

Speaking of moods, do you ever wake up on the wrong side of the bed? Or feel "off" from the moment you wake up? The people at AXBO.com believe it may have something to do with traditional alarm clocks disrupting natural sleep patterns. To ward off those "off" mornings, they've come out with a new and innovative alarm clock that monitors your sleep pattern and wakes you up at your best sleep phase. Using a sensor worn like a sweat band, the gadget tracks your movement which corresponds to your sleep patterns. The information is then wirelessly transmitted to the alarm clock which is set for your wake up time. The sensor "tells" the clock when to wake you up within a 30 minute window of your desired time. Available for \$241.00 at www.axbo.com.

Have you ever wondered what to do with your old cassettes, CD's or even records do you own? How about your old home videos? I have years worth of videotape of my kids, all stored conveniently on my old video camera cassettes, but we never watch them. It's just too inconvenient and involved to set them up to watch. In today's world, most of us know that music and video is best stored on our computers and backed up properly with all of our other important information. To get your old media sources into the 21st century, there are two great hi-tech devices that will



make awesome holiday gifts—an Audio Capture Device and a Video Capturing Device that will take your old music or old videos, and convert them to digital formats to allow you to use them with today's technology like MP3 players, iPods, and DVD and CD players.

River Past's Audio Capture and Video Cleaner are two great products to help you accomplish what may feel like a huge task at first. But trust me, having all those memories—musical and visual, easily accessible will be a gift to yourself. Work on the project over time, involve the kids and your spouse—you may relive some of those memories before the conversion even takes place! And once you have, visit www.RiverPast.com to learn more about this Microsoft certified partner.

I hope you enjoy a hi-tech holiday season and wish that the wonderful, wireless gadgets above bring you peace of mind and joyful fun as a family.

Devon Fleming's Pink Book, the hottest guide to living in Fairfield County, was published in its second edition. For more tips and information about Devon's numerous projects, visit her website www.DevonFleming.com and get solutions for your Home, Family and Fun.