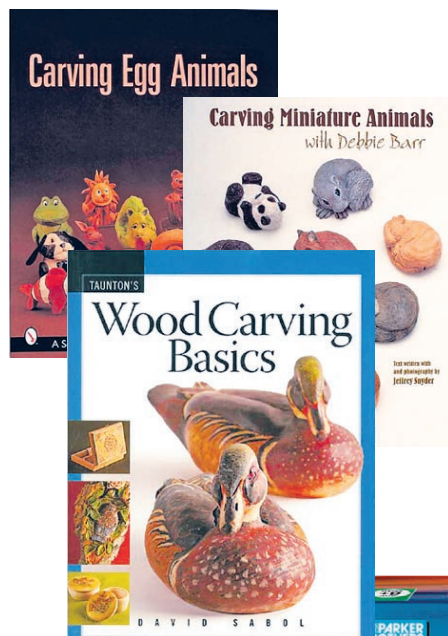




HOLIDAY COUNTDOWN

WHAT TO BUY

PRETEENS ON YOUR LIST



Getting a gift for “twens,” children between the ages of 9 and 12, isn’t easy. A “tween” isn’t quite a teenager yet, but they are quick to tell you they aren’t a child, either. So, with advice from the upper elementary class at West Side Montessori, here are some gift ideas.

— John Wagner
Blade Sports Writer

◀ **Crafts** — “Twens” are active and talented learners, especially of skills with practical uses such as knitting, crocheting, weaving, sewing, cooking, beading, and wood carving. Plus, the activity can keep active hands busy, helping to improve concentration and focus. **Yarn Cravin’** in Perrysburg or yarncravin.com offers classes whose costs range from \$15 to \$45.



▲ **Gift cards** — Grandparents searching for the “perfect” give can give ... their time, along with a gift card for a favorite store for “twens.” Give an i-Tunes card from **Kroger** in denominations ranging from \$15, \$25, \$30, or \$50. Better still is to propose a “date” that includes lunch at a favorite restaurant and a gift card for shopping at the child’s favorite store.



▲ **“Prank” gifts** — Maybe adults have outgrown such novelties as a fake spill glass or a whoopee cushion, but “twens” still love ‘em. **Spencer’s Gifts** sells gifts such as a faux Mohawk (\$19.99) and a potato chip “snake” can (\$5.99). spencersonline.com

▲ **Games** — No more “baby” games for “twens,” who are ready for more challenges. Toys-R-Us has shelves stocked with classics such as Life (\$19.99), Monopoly (\$19.99), and Risk (\$25.99). Apples to Apples (\$26.99) or Buzzword (\$19.99) helps them hone their word skills and have fun. The biggest challenge? Ticket to Ride (\$49.99) by Days of Wonder will teach them planning skills and more as they build railway routes over the United States and Europe. toysrus.com, daysofwonder.com

▲ **A day trip, family outing or vacation** — Get away for a day, a week, or more. “Twens” will love a trip to places such as Kalahari (KalahariResorts.com/Ohio) in Sandusky, where a two-night special that includes hotel, water park admissions, game tokens, and some meals can range from \$399.98 to \$679.98), or Splash Bay Resort in South Toledo (splashbayresort.com) can get you in the water for between \$19.95 to \$29.95. Or learn about the past at Sauder Village in Archbold (saudervillage.com), a historic village which will open April 30, with tickets selling at \$15 for adults and \$8 for students, with children under five admitted free.

▲ **Outdoor gear** — A “tween” is going to need a sleeping bag for sleepovers. Gander Mountain sells a variety of sleeping bags that range in price from \$29.99 to \$329.99. And that’s just the tip of the iceberg when you consider camping supplies and clothing to keep “twens” warm (or cool) in the great outdoors. gandermountain.com



▲ **Books** — Spark an interest in reading with some of today’s hottest series. Among the most popular are *Wings of Fire* by Tui T. Sutherland, which features dragons (books 1 and 2 are \$16.99 each), *The Kane Chronicles* by Rick Riordan focuses on Egyptian mythology (box set of books 1-3 for \$49.99), the *Missing* series by Margaret Peterson Haddix includes time travel (books 1-3 are \$16.99 each), and the *Warrior* series by Erin Hunter (\$36 for books 1 through 6) opens up a world of cat clans and their warrior code of honor. amazon.com, or through **Barnes & Noble** or **Walden Books**.



▲ **Remote-control gizmos** — What “tween” boy wouldn’t be excited by a remote-control car, helicopter or rocket, or perhaps a model train? HobbyTown USA has a variety of different models, including an HO Challenger EZ Train Set for \$114.95 and an Alpha III Model Rocket Launch Set for \$32.79. hobbytown.com



▲ **Tickets to an event** — Combine culture with excitement by grabbing tickets to Cirque De La Symphonie which is coming to the Stranahan Theater Feb. 7. Tickets for that event range from \$38 to \$58 and can be purchased from the Toledo Symphony, toledosymphony.com, 419-246-8000.



▲ **Take lessons** to learn a new skill or perfect an old skill — “Twens” are at a perfect age — and perfect temperament — to learn a new skill. Give them lessons to play a musical instrument: **Forté School of Music and the Arts** offers instruction in voice and a variety of instruments with costs ranging from \$60 to \$100 per month. Learn how to dance: Ballet Theatre of Toledo offers classes that meet as few times as once per week (\$275 for an 18-week semester) to daily (for \$1,039 per semester). Or learn a foreign language: The Alliance Francaise de Toledo offers beginner classes in French for \$150 for 15 hours of instruction. forte-musicandarts.com/mainmenu.html, ballettheatreoftoledo.org, aftoledo.com