

The Free Lance-Star

TECH TOYS: OH, SANTA, HERE'S MY LIST

BY MIKE ZITZ / FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR



Why, oh why, did Santa never bring me a high-tech baseball bat that hit 450-foot home runs by itself?

Here are some tech gifts I'd bring you if I were Santa:

94Fifty sensor basketball, \$300

Embedded in the ball are sensors that communicate via Bluetooth with your iPhone or iPad. An app “coach” tells you what adjustments you need to make in ball handling and shooting.

And it does it without mocking you or making you drop and give it 20 pushups or telling you to run laps until you throw up. It’s available at both brick and mortar and online Apple Stores.

(Coming next year is Vibrado sensor sleeve that uses feedback to train you to have proper shooting form.)

Of course, simply practicing shooting hoops can produce the same results, but that’s so 20th century.

OLLOCLIP IPHONE 4-IN-1 LENS, \$70

Oloclip’s 4-in-1 lens, made with precision-ground, coated glass multi-element optics, allows iPhone shutterbugs to take stunning wide angle, fish-eye, macro 10x and 15x ultra-closeup shots. Very cool. It’s available at Target and Best Buy.

Kindle Paperwhite, \$119

Amazon’s Kindle Paperwhite was already the best e-reader before this fall’s refresh that brought a more even and brighter light, a more sensitive touch screen and a faster processor. Amazon reportedly plans to launch a Paperwhite version 3.0 in the spring of 2014 with a higher resolution screen and some may want to wait for that. Or not. Available at Best Buy, Target, Amazon.com.

Rhino Shield, \$25

The Rhino Shield screen protector for iPhone is five times stronger than Gorilla Glass, scratch-proof and fingerprint- and smudge-proof. Back protectors are also available. Amaze your friends by hitting your phone with a hammer. Really. Available at BiteMyApple.com.

Phonesuit Flex Pocket Charger for Android and iPhone, \$70

The Phonesuit Flex Pocket Charger stores 125 percent of the juice your smartphone needs to recharge and it’s small enough to fit easily into even skinny jeans pockets. Well, it looks like it would. Not that I’ve ever worn skinny jeans. It’s available at Walmart.

Philips Hue kit, \$200

For \$200, you can get a Philips Hue starter kit including three LED bulbs and a bridge that allows you to control color, brightness and timing of home lighting with your smartphone via home Wi-Fi. The bulbs last for five years. This sounds really dumb, but it's fun. Trust me. Available at Macy's.

iPad Air from \$499, iPad Mini from, \$399

Weighing in at 1 pound and measuring 0.29 of an inch thick, the new iPad Air is the most portable iPad ever. It's thin and sexy and a sure bet not to disappoint the recipient of your gift. Its screen measures 9.7 inches.

The new, 64-bit, A7 chip that souped up the iPhone 5S makes the Air eight times faster than the previous iteration of the iPad.

The updated iPad Mini is also cool, and some prefer a 7.9-inch screen. One size does not fit all.

Evutec Kevlar and Wood Mobile Phone and Tablet Cases, \$40

Evutec has introduced a new line of iPhone 5/5S, iPad and iPad Mini cases that combine high-style concept with the extreme durability of Kevlar. Its Karbon S, SP and Wood S Series cases available now at the Apple Retail Stores apple.com at \$39.95. My favorite is the sleek bamboo case lined with Kevlar.

XboxOne \$500, PlayStation 4, \$400

Both new gaming consoles, the Xbox One and the PlayStation 4, sold a million units on their launch days. Both have great potential. Best to wait a few months until the kinks have been ironed out and there are more game titles available. That would be wise.

But if little Billy and Sally have written to Santa asking for the latest console so they can brag about better zombie-splattering graphics at school—well, that's why they launch consoles just before the holidays.

Logitech Bluetooth Easy Switch Keyboard, \$80

The Logitech Bluetooth Easy Switch Keyboard pairs easily with iPhones, iPads and Macs to let users type on those devices. It's a good quality backlit aluminum keyboard that can be paired with several devices and switch easily back and forth. Everyone who deals with a lot of email will thank you for this. Hint, hint. Available on Amazon.com.

Michael Zitz lives in Spotsylvania County. He has a nasty habit of buying tech gifts that he wants and telling his wife they're for the kids.

mzbeckham@gmail.com