

# Gift Ideas

## Gift Cards Unwrapped

(NAPSA)—If you're like many Americans, the next great gift you give or receive may be in the cards—the gift cards.

Gift cards have become the fastest-growing gift item over the past five years, with sales increasing from \$22 billion in 1999 to \$72 billion in the U.S. alone, according to TowerGroup, a leading industry analyst firm. In fact, a recent Consumer Insights Survey by ValueLink LLC found that 64 percent of adults in the U.S. said they bought or received a gift card in the previous 12 months (up 36 percent from a similar survey done in 2001).

So why the newfound popularity of gift cards? One reason may be that today's cards have become more universal. Rather than only being able to be used at one store, new types of cards let gift getters shop wherever they want, giving them more freedom to choose gifts that are right for them.

For instance, the American Express Gift Card can be redeemed at all retailers and restaurants that accept American Express in the U.S. (millions of different locations). That means recipients can use the cards to buy virtually anything, from sushi to sandals.



**Gift cards were among the most popular gifts last holiday season.**

The card can be used any number of times, at different retailers, until the funds are depleted—and the card is refundable if lost or stolen, making it safer to give than cash.

The cards are available in amounts between \$25 and \$500 and they can be bought online or in person at certain malls, banks, even drugstores and supermarkets.

That means that unlike some other holiday gifts (think fruitcakes and socks), chances are, the gift card you give will actually get used.

For more information, visit [www.americanexpress.com](http://www.americanexpress.com).