

Best Gadgets of 2015

For Holiday Gift-Giving
or Just Plain Cold Weather Fun!

Low-tech Tater



What's trendy this year?

- Smart Devices & “The Internet of Things”
 - Wearables
 - Phones
 - Television (LOTS of trends & changes)
 - Home appliances & devices
- Online Shopping
- Upgrade! Upgrade! Upgrade!*
- Cable Company Overthrow
- Old School, Updated
- Laptops and Tablets – The Big Merge

*Buyer beware.

*So many gadgets,
so little time.*

Smart devices:

Pros and cons – REMEMBER, convenience comes with a price. Anything that you can access via a device, i.e. your home alarm system, your car, the locks to your house, someone with not always the best intentions can access, too. No paranoia, just common sense.

Online shopping:

Hardly new, but the number of places and the number of different ways you can shop online has exploded over the past year or two. Today, you don't necessarily need to go to an online retailer like Amazon, nor the online version of a bricks and mortar store like Target to buy things. You can also shop via social media sites including Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, and Twitter. Consumerism knows no boundaries in today's world. Again, the convenience is terrific, but just remember the footprint that you leave and the number of places you're willing to share your private information. Be smart.

Upgrade!! Story of my television.

Story goes with the trend of breaking of cable. We were once held prisoner by large, overpriced cable services and had little to no choice in ways to access the programs we want to watch. That's changing and fast! Internet streaming is changing everything. I read in the January 2016 issue of Consumer Reports that 18% of US households with online video service have dropped their traditional cable television service. That's a HUGE change, when you think about it. Now that most homes in the US have high speed, broadband service, businesses like Apple, Amazon, Google, Roku, Hulu, Netflix, Sling TV, and more have jumped on the chance to produce and market the tools needed that allow you to watch what you want to watch, when you want to watch it. Even standard cable – I have Charter at my house – allows more and more “on demand” viewing. Streaming can still be a little bit quirky, but the pros seem to far outweigh the cons now, as shown by the movement of consumers in this direction.

WEARABLES
Your watch can tell you so much more than the time.

- Time+
 - Apple Watch
 - Moto 360
 - Samsung
- Fitness-Minded
 - Fitbit
 - Jawbone Up2 
 - Garmin Forerunner

Apple Watch





Jawbone

Moto



The **Apple Watch** needs no introduction. The first smartwatch from Apple will only work with iPhones. It can run apps, tracking activities, display notifications and has a speakerphone for answering calls (if your iPhone is in range). 20+ different styles ** Size – they’re big on your wrist. \$350 (sport models) - \$17,000 (yep!) at Apple Store

The Moto 360 runs Android Wear. It works with both iPhone and Android devices, and is capable of displaying notifications from your smartphone, as well as tracking steps and calories burned. Android users also have access to a variety of third-party apps through the Play store. But our favorite thing about the Moto 360 is it's beautiful design.

Fitbit is the brand that comes to mind when people think fitness trackers. In addition to being able to track steps, distance, calories burned and sleep, the Charge HR features an optical heart-rate sensor that continuously checks your pulse. They’ve been around awhile now and offer several varieties of trackers, from the clip-on Zip (I still like this one the best and you can find them for under \$50) to the latest model, the Surge, for performance-minded fitness folks (\$250). Time, HR, GPS, music, multi-sport tracking, etc.

While it may lack a display and more advanced sensors found in the Charge HR, the **Jawbone Up2** is a more discreet tracker fashionistas will enjoy. Jawbone's Android

GAMING
Play, play, play...

Luke, I am your father.

- Bundles and Portables
 - XBOX One Elite
 - Playstation 4 Limited Edition Star Wars Bundle
 - Nintendo!!
- Accessories
 - Keyboards & Fancy Headsets

The most interesting (and the most expensive) Xbox One bundle available this holiday season packs in a 1TB **Xbox One** with a solid-state hybrid drive and an Elite Controller. The SSHD will likely net faster overall Xbox One loading (we assume). It will be available December 1 for \$500.

This **500GB PlayStation 4** ships with a digital copy of Star Wars: Battlefront and a voucher containing four Star Wars Classics for \$400.

NINTENDO 3DS

THE GOOD The 3D screens are improved by new face-tracking, and the larger size offers a less cramped viewing experience. Internal tweaks and updates add a behind-the-scenes boost.

THE BAD The poor battery life hasn't improved. Having to remove the back of the console to change the SD card is a poor design choice and the legacy data transfer process is infuriating. Also, there's no AC charger in the box -- you have to buy one separately.

THE BOTTOM LINE The 3DS XL's improved 3D head-tracking is a big step up and its performance boost more makes a noticeable difference. A few head-scratching design choices prevent us from falling for the New 3DS XL, but this is still the best Nintendo portable to get. Costs a little under \$200

IT'S A SMART PHONE BLIZZARD!



- Samsung Galaxy Note
- Samsung Galaxy Edge
- iPhone 6 ❄️
- LG V10
- Google Nexus 6p & 5X
- Microsoft Lumina 950

On a budget?

- Motorola Moto G
- OnePlus
- LG G Stylo

Per CNET, “Abundant phone choices and sales make the holiday season one of the best times you can buy a phone for yourself or for someone you care about. So get crackin'.”

Samsung Galaxy Note 5 – 5.7” display, top-of-the-line stylus for writing, drawing, navigating. Pricing varies by carrier, but I saw AT&T at \$200, Verizon at \$300, and T-Mobile at \$700.

Samsung Galaxy Edge and Edge+ - Similar w/out note options. \$300 to \$750, depending on carrier and package.

iPhone 6 – 4.7” display, starting at \$550

iPhone 6 Plus – 5.5” display, starting at \$650

Options for memory (16 or 64GB) and carriers (AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, Verizon)

Monthly financing w/built-in annual upgrade option.

Also an iPhone 6S – same display sizes, more color choices and up to 128 GB memory. \$650-\$850

A second mini-screen along the top caps off **LG’s V10**, inaugural phone in this new line. More solid and bigger screen than G4. \$250 - \$700

Google Nexus 6P and 5X get a lot of positive reviews for it’s “bang for the buck.”



Laptops and Tablets



Laptop

- Apple Macbook Air
 - Small, light, traditional
- HP Spectre Touch
 - Convertible, touchscreen
- Microsoft Surface Pro
 - Detachable, touchscreen
- Chromebooks
 - Acer, Dell, Asus – *GO SEE I.T.!*

Tablets

- ❄️ Apple iPad – mini, Air, Pro
 - Different sizes, lots of accessories, phone capability
- Amazon Fire HD
 - Sizes and speed, best eReader
- Samsung Galaxy
 - Smaller models better rated than Apple, stylus is a plus

Features to consider:

GPS

Detachable keyboard

Swipe versus type modes

Ability to use a stylus

Size and portability

Reading, Gaming, Apps? What will you do with it, primarily?

Price

Story of what I chose and why.

OLD SCHOOL, UPDATED
 Everything old is new again. (And still an awful lot of fun!)

- Turn your smartphone into a Polaroid camera!
- Turn your smartphone into a slide projector!
- The IMPOSSIBLE Project
- Vinyl is BACK!

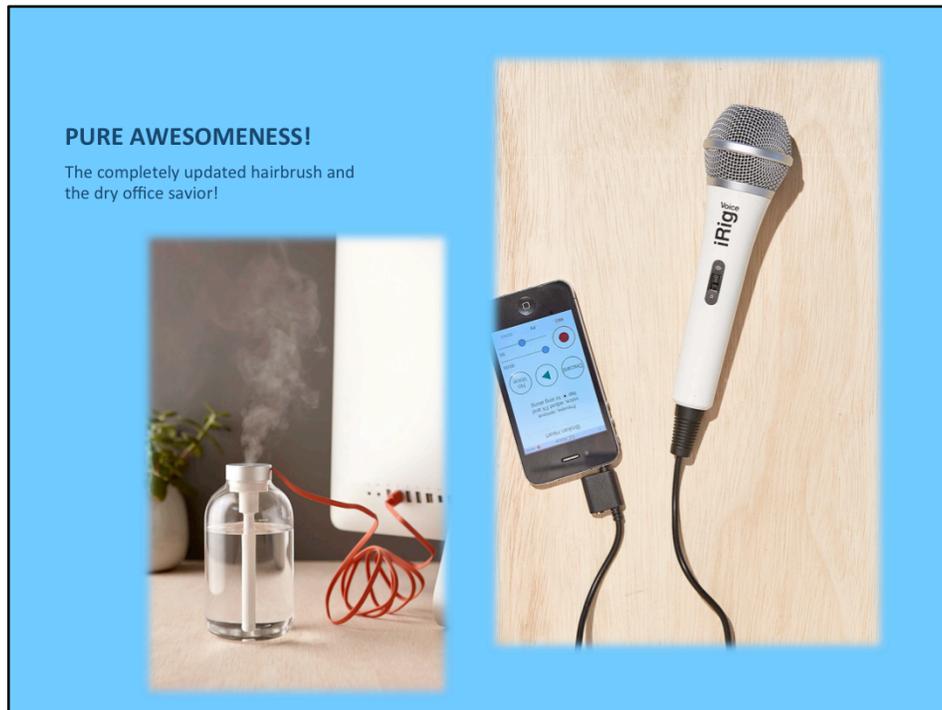
Print photos straight from your smartphone with this **Polaroid Zip Photo Printer**. Works with 2x3 Zink Film in full color for bright + fun + sticky-back prints you can share with your friends - peel + stick your photo stickers wherever! Just download the Polaroid Zip app to edit + personalize photos with emojis, drawings + more before printing with the simple push of a button. You can even share secret messages with your pics through personalized QR codes that only certain people can see. We love this printer to make unique + fun photos on the go. Great gift idea, too! \$130

Fuji makes a similar product, **Fujifilm Instax Instant Smartphone Printer**, for \$200. They do produce many more kinds of film to use – lots of cool borders and colors and such.

Vintage-inspired projector for your smartphone! Made from corrugated cardboard this genius invention lets you project things from the small screen of your phone onto the wall for easier viewing. Easy to assemble + easy to use, the projector also amplifies the sound. No need for an additional power source, but there is two slots at the back to accommodate your own charger. Compatible with most smartphones. \$28

The IMPOSSIBLE Project

We are the only company in the world producing instant film for classic Polaroid



Channel your inner Beyonce with the iRig Karaoke Microphone. Connect to your phone or computer microphone input for enhanced voice recording and improved sound quality. Download the free app EZ Voice to your smartphone or tablet, or check out the other compatible karaoke apps listed on your mic's packaging. Strong + lightweight design for long-lasting use. \$40

It's going on my list!

USB-powered mini bottle humidifier from the practicality experts at 11+. This humidifier is great for a bedroom, living or working space. Transparent + sleek design so it blends right in. Powerful enough to supply humidity anywhere - just full with water + plug in the cord to a USB port. (\$60)



Weego JS6 is a 12V lithium-ion jump starter, powerful enough to easily start gas engines up to 4.6L and diesel engines up to 2.4L and still fit in your pocket or bag. The carrying case makes it easy to store in your glove box or center console. Will also charge your phone, tablet, speakers and other USB devices. Simply plug Weego to your device with the included 3-in-1 USB charging cord. 1000 full charging cycles - 1000 full charges plus 1000 full discharges. 6000mAh capacity. 18 month warranty. \$99

If you happen to have a car that still has a tape deck (we do!), you can plop down \$32 and get this handy bluetooth adapter. Wire your car's cassette player for sound with this **Bluetooth** cassette adapter from Ion. Stream music + talk on the phone with your Bluetooth compatible device completely wire-free. Just put the adapter in your cassette player and you're ready to go. Runs for 4+ hrs on a single charge.

F.R.E.D. Flashing Roadside Emergency Disk \$15-\$40, 9 LED lights, different modes, emergency signal but also a way to gather your friends in a crowded parking lot – think concerts or tailgates.

Each **Flux Capacitor Car Charger** has two USB ports, each capable of charging almost any USB powered device (1 x 1A and 1 x 2.1A). But it also has that beautiful Flux Capacitor light sequence we all know and love.



November! \$16

Animal-themed multi-tool pocket gadget with 7 tools for everyday use. Functional + compact design perfect for taking with you wherever you go. Great gift idea, too! Includes: file, wire stripper, knife blade, bottle opener, flathead screw driver, punch, Philips head screw driver (\$18)

Multi-functional utility tool designed by Nate Barr at Zootility. Thin enough to fit in a credit card slot, so you can take it with you anywhere. Includes a comb, screwdriver, chip clip + hex wrenches and a lot more. (\$14)

The flexible and sweatproof BackBeat Fit is perfect for gym-rats and runners. At \$79 it offers wireless stereo sound and should be comfortable to wear, even if your workout isn't. Call quality is good, and the battery lasts for about 8 hours at moderate volume. (start around \$75-80)

So many magazines are available in a digital format today. I personally read "The Atlantic" each month on my Kindle. I enjoy subscriptions. It's a gift that pops up throughout the year.



LeapFrog Epic

Kids and tablets: most kids use them, but you probably don't want to give them yours. The new LeapFrog Epic runs most of the educational LeapFrog games and apps for kids that previous versions have, but it's built on an Android tablet. It runs its own OS, but can sideload the Amazon app store, too via a parental settings screen. Netflix and more can live side-by-side with "Letter Factory." (\$130)

Amazon Kindle Fire HD Kids Edition

Smartphones and tablets are easy enough for anyone to use now, but that doesn't mean kids don't need digital supervision.

Enter the Amazon Kindle Fire HD Kids Edition. The restrictive Amazon Sangria OS makes the tablet easy for kids to navigate and operate, while the extensive, built-in parental controls give parents the ability to limit activity. We liked it last year, and we like it again this year. \$150

Lego Dimensions

"Back to the Future," "The Simpsons," "Doctor Who," "Scooby-Doo," and "Jurassic World" get blended in the craziest Lego mash-up since "The Lego Movie." The \$99 game package includes a base and some real Lego mini figures that can be used in

So, what's on your list?

- Other items people have researched and wish to share?
- Questions about items not covered?
- Show & Tell

