

smart shopping

PLAN AHEAD TO AVOID HOLIDAY HEARTBURN

BY MARK LUCE

Tis the season to be yada, yada, yada. The onset of the holiday season and its attendant good tidings now starts before Halloween, blinding us with an onslaught of holly and the understated pressure of buying cool gifts for loved ones.

I'm generalizing here, but most guys neither like shopping nor are good at it. In fact, most are like me: You walk into the store knowing exactly what you want. If they don't have it, you turn around and walk out.

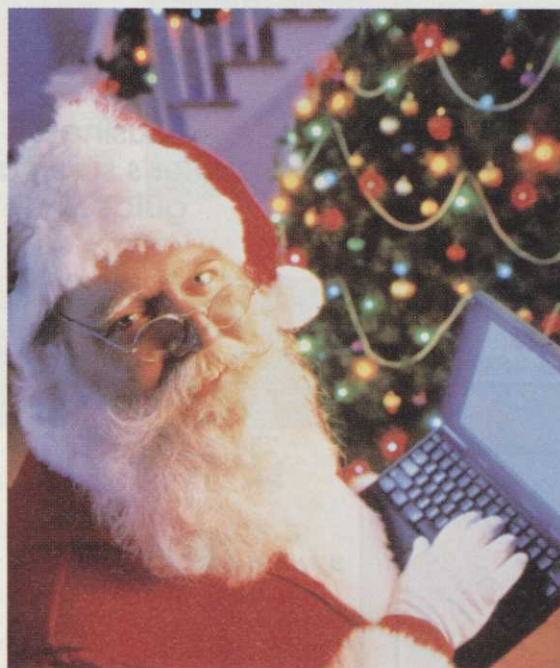
But for the holidays, especially if you're buying for a spouse or children, it's certainly time to linger a bit in Muzak-laden aisles, talk to sales clerks, spend time poking around online, and, perhaps most importantly, try a little tenderness.

So let's start with some basic gift-giving rules:

1. The following are not appropriate gifts for your significant other: a home theatre; a kick-ass stereo; a new computer; a gift certificate; cash; any type of ball either hit, rolled, tossed or shot; socks; luggage; pots or pans; and, it should go without saying, any type of turf equipment.

Rule of thumb: Don't get her anything that you are going to use more than she is.

2. The following are not appropriate gifts for your children: clothes that you



pick out; dress socks; and anything related to Barney the Dinosaur.

Now that we've done the don'ts, lets try the dos:

For the spouse: Thick robes, gorgeous picture frames, nice dresses, trendy furniture, an equally trendy coat, lingerie, fine wine, a personal digital assistant, and, of course, items that they specifically ask for. In case of total gift brain-freeze, you can't lose with jewelry, assuming you know what she likes.

For the kids: For grade-schoolers and teens a new Sega Dreamcast (you'll love the new NFL 2K game once you figure out the monster controls) will probably be at the top of their lists. Although with PlayStation 2 coming out next year, it may be wise to stick with old Playstation and try the new, solid titles from 989 Studios, such as JetMoto 3 and the surprisingly groovy SuperCross Circuit. Kids may also like one of the powerful and colorful computers from Apple, ei-

ther the portable iBook or the stay-at-home iMac.

And then, of course, there are the old standbys: FAO Schwartz makes great wooden boxes chock full of art supplies, it's still possible to find a good chemistry set, and they still make some cool LEGOs.

Ultimately, it comes down to being considerate and a little creative. Don't wait until Dec. 24 to hit the stores and end up short-handed when everything you're looking for is gone. Instead, plan ahead and ask questions what the people on your list

want. If you're smart (and have access to an Internet connection), you can do all the shopping in a few hours online.

To get you off on the right gift-buying foot, here are some Web sites that offer some of the coolest stuff around:

www.neimanmarcus.com — The name in all things fine. Clothes and jewelry that exude class.

www.fortunoff.com — Home furnishings, jewelry, crystal, etc.

www.etoys.com — All the toys fit to play with — and then some.

www.3dshopping.com — This site, which features mostly apparel, is designed to let buyers see, from every angle, what they are buying.

With that, Golfdom wishes you a happy holiday.

Mark Luce, a freelance writer based in Lawrence, Kan., purchased a leopard-skin coat for his girlfriend last Christmas. She's still with him.