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with little or no room for receiving gifts at the holidays. But there are exceptions.

Let's start with the things you don't want to give. Sound bars made by Vizio, which have more problems than you can shake a stick at. Tablet PCs, which tend to be a very personal choice and hence easy to get wrong. GPS units, which are so…last year. Digital cameras, which are even worse. And while a portable hard drive is always a handy thing to have, it's a pretty impersonal present.

So here is my list of relatively cool gifts for the tech or semi-tech in your life.

My list of gifts tends to lean toward the practical, and so what I look for are things that will make the average person's life easier…with a price tag under $100. Here's my first of several lists for the 2012 season:

Stanley DPS109 Digital Portable Power Station

The Stanley Digital Power Station features a 350-amp battery jump starter with 700 peak battery amps, a built-in digital tire inflator with automatic set and auto shut off, a 200 watt 120 volt power inverter, a 3 LED emergency light, USB, and DC outlet. Measures 10 x 7 x 11 inches, and weighs in at 11 lbs. $95 at Amazon.com.

Logitech Washable Keyboard K310 for Windows PCs – Black (920-004033)

I don't know of anyone who likes the buildup of crud and dirt on their keyboard. But until now, washing the keyboard has been an exercise in futility. Now Logitech comes to the rescue with a keyboard designed to be hand-washed (not dishwasher safe!). $35 at Amazon.Com.

Nuance Dragon Naturally Speaking Home 12 Software

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to every time. $69 at TigerDirect.

AutoPage Remote Car Starter with Keyless Entry – C3-RS603

This is a Remote Car Starter Keyless Entry System featuring 5-button transmitters. 2-Channel remote start module includes Keyless Entry, Trunk Release and 2-Way Data Port, compatible with C3 Cellular/Telematics module. About $60 at Amazon.Com.

SRS Labs DCT-8S MyVolume Advanced HDMI Television Volume Leveling Adapter Featuring SRS TruVolume, Black

There are other, less expensive units that promise to level out the annoying jumps in volume when you shift channels or a network switches to commercials. But we've tested the TruVolume technology from SRS Labs and found it to work just fine. Is it perfect? No. But darned close to it. $55 at Amazon.Com.

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