

Gift Ideas for Fitness Fanatics

By Kimberly Monaghan

One of the best ways to show you care this holiday season is to give someone the gift of good health. No one understands that better than the fitness fanatic. Unfortunately, fitness buffs can also be the most challenging people to shop for. What do they want? What do they need? Although they may have a plenty of water bottles, running shoes, and free weights on hand, people who love sports and fitness are always on the lookout for smart gear, new equipment and cutting-edge fitness supplies that enhance their active and healthy lifestyle.

Fitness Supplies

A fitness fanatic can tear through equipment and supplies quickly, often replacing items they use on a regular basis. Rubber, yoga or spongy floor mats make great gifts because of the frequent wear and tear they're subjected to. Rubber mats that are placed under weight benches or used to create a soft surface for cardio workouts are inexpensive and come in compact and easily transportable sets. Spongy floor mats are a little more expensive, starting at around \$150, but they provide a wide range of useful enhancements for any activity from Pilates and martial arts to gymnastics and dance. Stretch cords and balance balls are another great gift and can enhance a set they may already have, as well as serve as backup. In keeping with the on-the-go theme, a new fitness bag packed with towels, stretch cords, a compact mat, sport sunglasses and DVDs is an ideal gift for someone who doesn't like to leave their workout behind.

New Equipment

Anything that can supplement a workout regimen makes a great gift for fitness fanatics. Investing a little ingenuity into what might enhance their workouts would not only broaden their athletic horizons, but really show that you put some thought in meeting their needs.

"More and more people are turning to yoga as a supplement to, or replacement for, their traditional workout," explains Scott McBain, buyer for MC Sports. "A mat, yoga block and DVD are enough to get someone started on a whole new activity."

Also keep in mind that fitness fanatics never stop training, no matter the season. Rubber grips for running shoes that allow for traction in ice and snow, a set of roller blades for off-season hockey training, and weight sets for resistance training during inclement weather are fantastic gift ideas that encourage year-round fitness.

Celebrities & athletes such as Lance Armstrong, Penelope Cruz, Jessica Biel, Katherine Hiegl, Jennifer Lopez, Matthew McConaughey, the super ripped cast of the movie "300," Mariska Hargitay and Kim Cattrall use kettlebells to put major muscle into their routines and Jennifer Love Hewitt recently made headlines by losing 18 lbs in 10 weeks with the help of kettlebells. Starts at \$29.99.

Smart Gear

For someone who loves all kinds of sports, consider buying a gift that can easily transfer from one activity to another. Athletic apparel that is both comfortable and hi-tech is a must have for fitness fanatics.

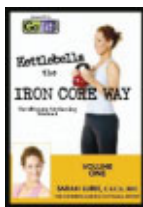
"There are too many people working out in cotton and just haven't tried performance clothing made from moisture wicking fabrics," explains McBain. "Once they try it they never go back to sweats and a T-shirt." He also recommends a heart rate monitor as a great all around gift. "It will allow them to get an idea of how hard they are working, no matter what the activity."

Cutting-Edge Products

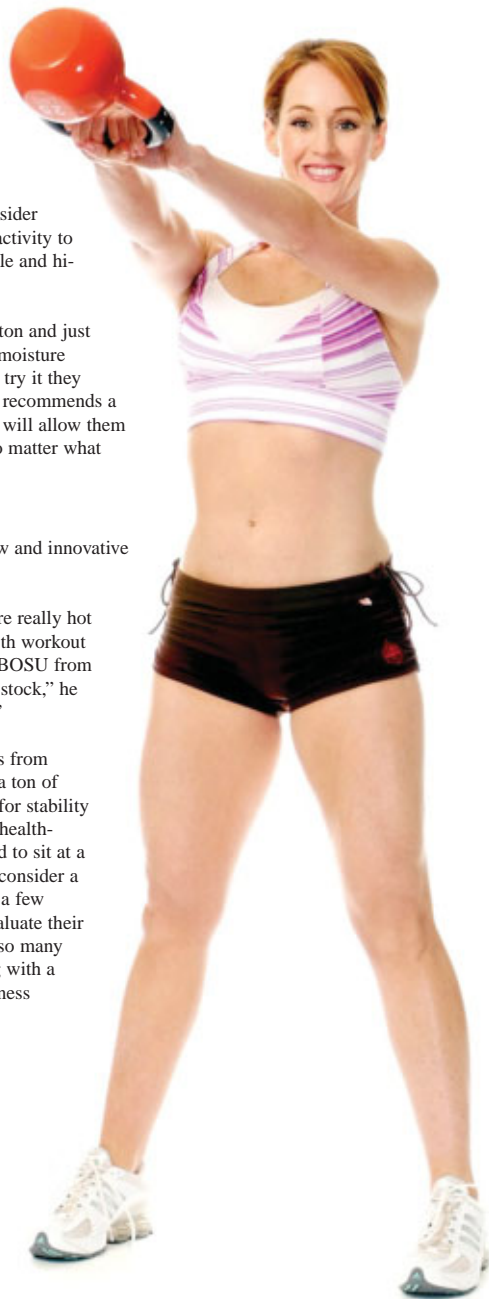
Every fitness fanatic loves trying out all the new and innovative products hitting the shelves each year.

"Kettlebells from GoFit with a training DVD are really hot right now," states McBain. "They offer a strength workout that has become very popular for women. The BOSU from Fitness Quest has become very hard to keep in stock," he explains. "It may be the hottest item in fitness."

McBain also recommends adjustable dumbbells from Reebok and Pro-Form, which save money and a ton of space. The Stayball from Reebok utilizes sand for stability in creating a safer workout, as well as an ideal health-enhancing chair when fitness fanatics are forced to sit at a desk. Of course, if you really want to impress, consider a sports and fitness travel package or purchasing a few hours with a personal trainer to help them reevaluate their regimen from a professional perspective. With so many choices to consider, McBain advises consulting with a fitness expert to find the perfect give for the fitness fanatic on your holiday list.



Sarah Lurie's best selling DVD "KETTELBELLS THE IRON CORE WAY" is included with each GoFit Kettlebell.



Kimberly Monaghan is a certified yoga instructor and freelance writer.