

Alt-Parenting: To Buy or Not To Buy, That Is the Christmas Question



This year my son has asked Santa for three unreasonably expensive gifts: a Polar Express train (\$400); WiiU (\$300) and a Kindle Fire HD (\$130). He thankfully knows that Santa will bring only one of these items, as opposed to expecting all three. He kindly left it up to Santa to decide.

Given his budget, Santa assuredly wants to choose the least expensive item, but Santa isn't sure how she (I mean he) feels about giving a Kindle Fire HD to an 8-year-old who has absolutely no intention of reading books on said device. You see, his friend has a Kindle Fire HD and my son swoons over the

notion of having a similar device all to himself, where he can play his own games, and choose his own shows on Netflix. I, on other hand, am picturing him watching endless YouTube videos of “Baby Got Back” and Googling “boobs” time and time again. Santa is very conflicted.

To add to Santa’s conundrum is the fact that my older son has a 5-year-old brother, who also has asked Santa for a Kindle Fire HD ... and nothing else. Santa thus far has always delivered, so my kids’ expectations are high. Can I really mess with Christmas magic and deny them the only gifts they’ve asked Santa to bring?

I supposed I could tell the younger one that Santa doesn’t bring such elaborate presents to 5-year-olds. That would work if he didn’t have friends to whom Santa has brought similar devices. Plus, picturing his reaction on Christmas morning when his brother gets the gift of his dreams and he doesn’t is almost more than I can bear. So the Kindles arrive for both of them, or neither of them, bringing me back to my original question: buy Kindles for both kids and fulfill their Santa wish list, or shatter their Santa dreams and get them something else?

I’ve run the issue by a few friends and have gotten suggestions that run the gamut from “chill out and just buy it” to “I didn’t know your children were so entitled!” My husband has exclaimed his disdain for my Christmas excess but, like most issues in our marriage, he deferred to my decision. This is why we’ve stayed married for almost 10 years, and might just last another 10.

In the end, I went against my better judgment (and for Christmas gluttony) and bought Kindles for both of them. Attached to the outside of each gift is a document, borrowing from that infamous [Cell Phone Contract](#). My boys will agree that, although this device technically belongs to them, Mom and Dad keep custody and bring it out when earned.

I, on the other hand, will fight my urge to hand over these devices at will and watch my children sink into a Kindle-induced coma where they don’t fight with one another and I can sleep in. Alas, I will do my job as a parent and exert control and limitations ... but maybe after New Year’s. After all, I do need to get through Christmas break, and just found out there’s a “Walking Dead” marathon starting New Year’s Eve. Long live the Kindle Fire!

May your holidays be filled with magical moments for you as well as your children - whatever it takes.