

# Gift Giving: The "Rule of 4"

By Meg Brunson

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As a kid, I loved when there were TONS of gifts under the tree and stockings overflowing!

When I became a mom I wanted to bring that kind of magic to my kids Christmas year-after-year - TONS of gifts that they wanted, big stockings packed full of trinkets and snacks! And for a couple of years that is precisely what we did! I would start Christmas shopping early and stash stuff away, so by the time Christmas rolled around I had completely lost track of how many gifts I had bought and how much money I had spent, and ended up with way more than necessary.

Then, like most people go through once or twice in their lives, we hit a rough patch. With Christmas approaching, I came to realize that the extravagance I wanted would simply not be possible. I remembered hearing about a "Rule of 4" when it comes to Christmas gift-giving, and this was the perfect time to test it out:

- One thing they want
- One thing they need
- One thing to wear
- One thing to read

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## Family Resource Network

978-654-5704; [gfortes@commteam.org](mailto:gfortes@commteam.org)

The Family Resource Network is funded by the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Grant from the MA Department of Early Education and Care.

It is managed by Community Teamwork



Simple enough. We decided this would be the rule that Santa would follow in our home (we did decide to buy one gift for each child and a group gift from Mom & Dad, too). We still made wish lists so I could get a feel for what the biggest wants were and I tried to choose one from that list. The rest of the list I passed on to friends and family who inquired about what the kids wanted.

Following these guidelines allowed us to scale back Christmas, save money and (as we'd soon discover) save our sanity!

On Christmas Day, the kids had enough presents to open to enjoy the Christmas magic, without having so much that they became overstimulated. Having a more "reasonable" number of gifts allowed them to more thoroughly enjoy the gifts they were given and to focus on some of the other values of the holiday season.

This year, we have officially adopted the magical "Rule of 4" in our house - and that is what Santa will continue to follow for many Christmases to come!



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