



## December Newsletter: Our Holiday Gift Guide

Hello!

There's always a lot of hype around new gadgets and high-tech toys during the holiday season. We tend to be wary of over-hyped gifts, so we took a closer look at two of the most popular ones, the Flip mini-camcorder and Apple's Magic Mouse, to see whether they're really worth the excitement.

We've also included some stocking stuffers in case you need some last-minute ideas... and since 2009 has been the year of "iPhone app overload" (seems like there's a new "best of" list every time we read TechCrunch), we're keeping things in perspective by making this an iPhone-free newsletter. Enjoy!

Happy holidays,  
Rafi and Josh  
Founders, Cartwheel

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### Flip Mino and Flip Ultra



Small as they are, these pocket-sized digital camcorders from Flip are hard to miss. They've got a cool, simplistic design... and the Mino can be ordered with a customized skin (pick from their options or upload your own). When we tested the Ultra, there were a handful of features we liked a lot:

- It's small... a little too big to carry in a jeans pocket all day, but still very manageable.
- The resolution is surprisingly good. We didn't expect great video quality from such a tiny and inexpensive camera, but we were pleasantly surprised.
- Easy enough for kids – or grandparents – to use. The buttons are big and well-marked. Record, playback, and trash buttons are front and center, and menus are understandable.

There were a few things we didn't like:

- It feels very "plastic" – almost cheap. The video quality is fine, though, so this isn't really a problem for the average consumer. But the USB plug felt fragile – good thing it hides away for storage inside the camera.
- Everything works great while it's unplugged. But once you hook it up to the computer, transferring video and playing from your PC can be complicated: you have to download special software from Flip's website.

- We also saw some potential issues with file types for people trying to use players other than the downloaded Flip player... the videos work best (sometimes only) while using that application.

Overall, if you're just looking for a simple, affordable camcorder without too many bells and whistles, we'd definitely recommend the Flip. Despite its shortcomings, it's an easy-to-use recorder that's long overdue in a market where digital cameras and camera phones have shot ahead (though sadly, it can't take still photos). Both the Mino and the Ultra sell for \$149.99, at [www.theflip.com](http://www.theflip.com).

Note: Flip just released a product called FlipShare TV, which allows you to watch their video library wirelessly on a home TV and share the whole library with other users.

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## Apple Magic Mouse



Apple has always had an interesting relationship with the mouse. The company favors keyboard-centric navigation, so its one-button mice and trackpads tend to confound anyone who's not a Mac junkie. A lot of that changed when they introduced multi-touch trackpads on their laptops: depending on how many fingers you use to touch the pad as you navigate, the functions change. It's pretty useful. Now, they're bringing that functionality to desktop users with the wireless Mighty Mouse. We had a chance to play with one, and while it was a lot different than a traditional mouse (no buttons to click!), we liked it.

The whole mouse works on the multi-touch principle, so it's in many ways more like using an iPhone than using a mouse. You swipe instead of click... which is disconcerting at first, since some actions lack the physical feedback you usually get from clicking. But the whole mouse is one giant button, so clicking isn't gone entirely. And if you don't like swiping or having to pay attention to multiple fingers, you can turn off the "Magic" functionalities and just use it as a traditional point-and-click mouse.

We really liked how much extra functionality the multi-touch options offered. There's a learning curve there, but given our current experience with the iPhone and MacBook multi-touch screens and trackpads, it wouldn't take long to get used to.

The dealbreaker? It doesn't work with a PC... or even with older Macs: it requires Mac OS X Leopard version 10.5.8 or later. But if you know someone who has a Mac desktop or likes to use "real" mice with a laptop, it's a great gift idea.

The Magic Mouse is \$69 at the Apple Store. You can read more at [www.apple.com/magicmouse](http://www.apple.com/magicmouse).

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## Stocking Stuffers

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### Mittenberry Gloves



These wool mittens have thumb flaps that flip back so that you can use your smartphone's keyboard without feeling like you have marshmallow fingers.

Mittenberrys are \$24.99, and you can find them at [www.mittenberry.com/theshop](http://www.mittenberry.com/theshop).

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### USB 180° Revolving 4 Ports Hub



If you have a lot of different USB devices, plugging everything in is a messy proposition (BlackBerry sync cable, keyboard, camera cable... maybe even the Flip camcorder we covered above). This 4-port USB hub rotates so that wide plugs don't crowd out everything else you need to plug in.

You can find for \$16.00 it at [usb.brandoo.com/prod\\_detail.php?prod\\_id=00352](http://usb.brandoo.com/prod_detail.php?prod_id=00352).

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### Gorillapod Flexible Tripod



The Gorillapod is an oldie, but a goodie. The small tripod screws into the bottom of most digital cameras, and can stand or wrap around anything so you can take photos from new angles... or finally use the camera's self-timer to get everyone in the shot. It's \$21.99.

You can find it at [www.amazon.com/Joby-GP1-D1EN-Gorillapod-Flexible-Tripod/dp/B000EVSLRO](http://www.amazon.com/Joby-GP1-D1EN-Gorillapod-Flexible-Tripod/dp/B000EVSLRO)