



Soft Kitty singing sensation

The singing "Soft Kitty" plushie and T-shirt combo gift pulled from an episode of "The Big Bang Theory" is cute, but juvenile.

When you press its paw, the 10-inch, gray-and-pink plush cat sings a song featured on only one episode of the quirky television show (when Sheldon gets sick). The form-fitting gray T-shirt pictures the kitty and the lyrics of the song. As a gift, the combo is childish unless you are a big fan of the show or of cuddly cats in general. Whimsical? Yes.

But it misses the mark for anyone except the biggest "Big Bang" fans. \$44.99 for combo, www.stylinonline.com
 - Anika Reed, Everglades High

Mario Kart 7, 3DS

Developed by Nintendo; Releases Dec. 4.

If there's one thing Nintendo is great at, it's keeping a series alive without it growing dull and stale. Mario Kart 7 doesn't change much over past games. You still race against other players on courses based off of Nintendo games, nabbing power-ups and flying off jumps on the way. Yet, what little the latest entry adds (primarily under-water and flying sections of levels) increases the game as a whole to a shocking degree. These minor changes don't much alter how a kart is raced or how players interact, but they break up a race and tweak the handling of a kart just enough to keep the energy up. In addition, the game truly shows off what the 3DS is capable of, rendering beautiful environments and better 3D than the console has yet seen. All the elements tie together to form one of the more entertaining entries in the series. \$39.99 - Ryan Kennedy, Teenlink correspondent

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HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

M&M's make it yours

Do you know a chocoholic with a naked iPhone 4? Get them the Incipio "dotties" lightweight protective case to cover it up. It makes the perfect gift for your sugar-crazed friend or family member. With four background colors and interchangeable, multi-colored M&M's for decoration, you can pick the color combo that most suits you. Incipio's sweet case makes a useful gift for any time. \$34.99, www.myincipio.com

- Sharon Ghelman, David Posnack School



4G speed pushes LG Esteem to the front of the pack

The 4G LTE enabled LG Esteem is an extremely efficient smartphone, allowing users to talk, text, play games, surf the web, stream video and more at 4G Internet speeds.

One of its best features is its Android technology. With that technology comes the "Market," which includes many free applications that enhance the phone.

The phone's 4.3-inch touch screen is also a huge advantage.

The Esteem makes texting easy with its on-screen keyboard, which displays automatically when you need to text, and its Swype option. Swype allows you type a word by drawing through letters instead of tapping them, giving typing a new definition.

The phone also has a 1.3MP camera on the front and a 5MP camera with flash on the back, shoots 720p HD video and has HDMI output. The call quality is good, and the battery lasts an average five hours of talk time.

The Esteem is a bit pricey at \$349, but it has a \$100 mail-in rebate until Jan. 1.

Also, MetroPCS has a variety of inexpensive monthly unlimited rate plans (\$40-\$60) that make up for that cost.

MetroPCS also offers Esteem buyers a free 90-day trial to Rhapsody on activation. The Rhapsody trials end Jan. 1.

Even though the phone's many advantages outweigh the disadvantages, there are a few things to consider.

The phone itself is heavy and bulky, making it uncomfortable for longer phone calls without a headset.

It also freezes often and the 4G Internet does not work quickly in all areas. However, where the 4G Internet works, it is extremely fast.

The charger has a USB cable attached to the wall port, which eliminates extra cables, but you need to move the accessory port lid on the side of the phone to plug it in, which can be annoying.

However, once plugged in, the Esteem keeps you up-to-date with the percent while charging, which is helpful.

Overall, the phone is extremely easy to use and ideal for heavy texters who want the web at their fingertips. - Lauren Miller, Sagemont



Ask me a question

The 20Q, a simulation game that'll play 20 Questions with you and guess with reasonable accuracy what you're thinking of, is a great gift for anyone who likes to match their wits against technology. Warning: It will not fall for it if you just answer "no" for everything, and it will guess your simple nouns with ease and be vaguely stuck-up about it. Its one weakness: it cannot deduce its own existence. \$12.99 at retailers nationwide - Max Van Zile, Fort Lauderdale High