

## Have Yourself a Merry, Stylish Christmas

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As the holiday season draws near, many people's minds shift from schoolwork to social events. One question that will never fade is what to wear to these special occasions without looking too festive.

This season, holiday party dresses are a mixture of classic and contemporary. The little black dress is as popular as ever. The fashion magazine *InStyle* suggests on its website, <http://www.instyle.com>, to "[A]dd sass to basic black with colorful accessories, like turquoise earrings and shoes."

Red and ruby shades are still considered festive holiday colors. However, the *InStyle* website warns, "If you want to show your festive side, don't resort to Santa accessories." It goes on to suggest pairing such a dress with metallic accessories in shades of bronze or gold. If you would like to go more traditional, try a pair of black pumps instead.

Metallics are still going strong this holiday season. *InStyle*'s website remarks, "A modern way to wear metallics is to pair gold accessories with a silver dress." Make sure such accessories match closely to avoid a metallic mishap.

This season's hottest trend is bold, bright colors. *InStyle*'s website states, "Bright colors ... look amazing on most skin-tones." One of the website's suggestions is to pair a bubblegum-pink dress with a gold, jeweled necklace and black heels. Another popular

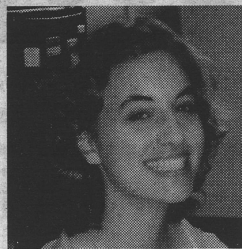
combination this season is a canary yellow dress with red or black pumps. A teal dress with a bow at the bustline and paired with black heels is an elegant choice as well. This season's must-have color, purple, looks stunning with silver accessories. "Purple ... looks wonderful on any skin tone and is always age-appropriate," states *InStyle*'s website.

If you are attending a party that is less formal, try a jeweled sweater paired with denim and heels. Check out the jeweled wool and cashmere blend shrugs and shells at Banana Republic. Metallic wool cardigans laced with sequins and found at J. Crew are also a great pick, states the *InStyle* website.

If you are feeling more adventurous, try wearing a jewel-tone tank embellished with sequins or a bow. According to *InStyle*'s website, Twelfth Street by Cynthia Vincent, Robert Rodriguez and MINT Jodi Arnold all offer great pieces.

No outfit is complete without the proper accessories, and this season's trends complement the bold colors, textures and structures popular during the holidays, states the *InStyle* website. Satin shoes, clutches, and bracelets are all in vogue this season. Pearls, a classic favorite, are shown on jewelry and adorning pumps and handbags. Bold, crystal jewelry is hot as well, as are peep-toe pumps adorned with bows. Shoes, jewelry and clutches that feature a combination of

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## Star Tech

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Are you running low on Christmas funds this year? If you can't afford gifts for all of your friends, you might just be in luck because technology can save the day (and your friendships!). The Internet offers tons of free or low-cost options—you just have to know where to find them.

E-cards offer a free, easy way to show people that you're thinking of them during the holidays. Search for free holiday e-cards on the Internet, and a multitude of options will appear. My favorite e-card selection (not only for Christmas cards but also for year-round events) is a Hallmark division called hoops and yoyo. Hoops and yoyo are two adorably cute (and hilarious) animated critters who are bound to bring a smile to any loved one who receives one of their cards. Visit <http://www.hallmark.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/CategoryDisplay?storeId=10>

001&catalogId=10051&tabOn=ecards&categoryId=-102034&CatIDsList=-102001;11443;-102034 for the entire hoops & yoyo selection. If you don't feel like typing that, just search for "hoops and yoyo" and up will come [www.hoopsandyoyo.com](http://www.hoopsandyoyo.com), where you can navigate to "free e-cards." Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year cards are among the offerings.

Even Facebook is offering its users the opportunity to send some Christmas cheer. The application "My Christmas Tree" includes a Christmas countdown, a choice of dozens of decorated trees, the ability to add a favorite Christmas tune to your tree and a virtual store in which you can choose and wrap presents for your friends, and then send them to their Christmas trees. You can even include a personalized message, and Facebook will allow users to open their presents no sooner than Christmas day, so no peeking allowed!

If you do have some cash to spare and still want to get something technologically related,

there are a multitude of options available. Thousands of retailers offer online gift cards—many can even be sent via e-mail. Amazon.com, iTunes and Snapfish.com all offer gift cards and are also universally appreciated. Amazon offers everything under the sun, so even that difficult-to-buy-for Uncle Fred can choose something he'll enjoy. As for iTunes and Snapfish, who doesn't like music or photos? In addition to picture prints, Snapfish also offers an array of personalized gifts, such as coasters, mugs, posters, notepads, mouse pads, ornaments, holiday cards, and much more.

With the popularity of e-gifts rising, I have to wonder if, one day, everyone will sit around her computer screen to digitally open her gift instead of congregating around the Christmas tree. Let's hope not. While technology is great, it certainly can't take the place of Christmas traditions with family. This year, feel free to find some cute new technology-oriented gifts, but don't go TOO crazy with them. Be sure to remember the true spirit of the holidays!



This year, send some holiday cheer electronically. Shown here: free hoops & yoyo e-card