

At this time of year those who compute are dreaming of what they would like to see in their Christmas stocking and those who want to put something there for their loved ones are at a loss to decide what makes sense.

This year they are somewhat spoiled for choice due to the kind manufacturers trying to part them from their money by launching a wealth of products for gadget-minded people.

Unfortunately the age-old problems remain. On the one hand, how does the hopeful recipient drop the right sorts of hints to get a good result? At one time you could hint that a pair of gloves would be handy (sorry).

You couldn't casually mention that you would be happy with fine black leather with external finger seams hand-stitched with crimson thread and lined with cotton-backed fleece containing heating wires powered by a battery bracelet built in to the cuffs and rechargeable overnight wirelessly (without needing to plug it in to a power outlet).

The poor giver (even poorer after the gift) will have no idea of the detailed specification and would not understand it if it was described in the shop and would have to buy it on trust, hoping for the best.

The giver has no comfort from previous experience. It's no good saying to oneself, "he already has a digital camera" for instance because his dearest wish might be to upgrade last year's camera to a better one with new features.

Exactly the same argument applies to computers, laptops, mobile phones, printers and the whole panoply of accessories. Not to mention iPods, iPads, smartphones, Microsoft 'Surface' and the neat ways that laptops can convert into notepads with or without a keypad.

More and more facilities are becoming available via your TV. Software is always subject to upgrades and refinements. The touchscreen introduced on mobile phones is working its way onto larger items.

Let's solve the age-old problem with an age-old solution updated for the modern age. A letter to Santa. As a grown-up you will be able to do your research properly and have the skills to set out exactly what you are hoping for. You might even include a picture cut-out from a magazine containing a detailed specification or even a link to a website.

Be sure to explain to your partner that you again believe in Santa and you want to be sure he precisely understands what you would like. Then entrust it to the care of your partner for posting.

If you get a couple of shirts and a tie do not be disappointed. After all, you can now be certain that your partner has a deep respect for the privacy of your communications.

And remember to say a very nice thank you for your gift.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 10th December at All Saints Lesser Hall, Victoria Square, Penarth. 7.30 pm for 8.00. It will be a "Chips and Chat" social, evening with a fun Quiz by Mike J. See penarthcomputerclub.co.uk.

