Gift cards are the perfect one-size-fits-all present for many of those on your gift list. They are easy to buy, easy to mail and you’ve never bought the wrong gift — unless it is for the wrong retailer. If you have any doubts about the retailer, then opt for a retailer that carries a wide variety of merchandise.

You can purchase gift cards from lots of different retailers online or even at our local stores. But what if you could buy these gift cards for less?

How would you like $100 worth of gifts for $80? You can purchase discounted gift cards for hundreds of online/offline retailers including the Apple Store, Radio Shack, Sears, Home Depot and others. Discounts are usually 5–30 percent off the face value of the card. Websites like Plastic Jungle, GiftCardRescue.com and GiftCards.com offer gift cards at a discount.

These websites allow you to buy, sell or exchange gift cards. They offer you discounts of up to 35 percent and can pay you as much as 90 percent of the face value of cards you can’t use. Check there first before you order a gift card online or buy it from the store.

Consider buying gift cards from a warehouse store. Both Costco and Sam's Club sell gift cards for less than their face value (usually about 15–20 percent less). Use your membership to get cheap cards for iTunes, Regal Cinemas, AMC Theatres, Baja Fresh and other popular brands.

Social media is another option for less expensive gift cards. Before you start shopping, start following your favorite retailers on Twitter and Facebook. Many companies offer discounts exclusively to their Twitter followers and Facebook friends. A quick search of their recent posts may reveal money-saving discount codes.

There are half-price websites that offer great deals. Check groupon.com, halfoffdeals.com and halfoffdepot.com. They offer an ever-changing inventory of gift cards for half of their regular retail. You'll find deals for area restaurants, clothing stores, shows, trips and
more. When I checked, only groupon had a deal specifically for Alaska — and it was in Anchorage. But if you are buying a gift for your niece in Atlanta, there are a wide variety of items on all three of these websites.

Buy in bulk. Check the gift card displays at grocery stores and discount stores for bulk packs of cards. These often sell for less than the total value of the cards — a great deal if you plan to give the same gift to multiple people or if you can get cards to a store that you shop at frequently.

Lots of restaurants — and an increasing number of stores — offer gift card promotions around the holidays. Buy a $25 gift card, and they'll throw in a $5 gift card. Buy a $50 gift card, and they'll throw in a $10 card. Start paying attention to radio advertisements and you might just find a deal.

Auction sites such as eBay often offer discounts on cards — but you'll need to do some research to make sure the card is legitimate. Check the seller's ratings and ask about any expiration date or dormancy fees that might apply. I checked today and several were available at about 10 percent below the face value of the card.

Check websites such as fatwallet.com and slickdeals.com and see what they are offering. Put gift card in the search box and see what might pop up. I found a video game that might work as one gift for $60, but it also had a $20 gift card for Dell with it. Nice way to get two gifts at once.

Gift cards can be a good present and can save you money.

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