

Free Shipping Day

oliday shopping online has one major barrier that shopping in your local store doesn't, and that's the high cost of shipping. You can easily double the cost of your gift items (and thereby, halve the amount of gift-buying you can do) just by getting hit left and right with shipping costs. That's where Free Shipping Day comes in, where companies around the world give you the opportunity to do your holiday shopping without being hit for shipping fees left and right, and letting your holiday shopping bucks go further than ever.

#EPISTEMIC ACTIONS

Why Scientists Are Interested In Shaking Presents

There are few things more delightful than seeing a child's eyes light up as they pick up a present and wonder what might be inside



As you shake the present with your name on it, know that people watching, can tell what you're trying to find out: number of objects or the shape of what's inside.

"There are few things more delightful than seeing a child's eyes light up as they pick up a present and wonder what might be inside," says author Chaz Firestone, an assistant professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences at Johns Hopkins University, who investigates how vision and thought interact.

"What our work shows is that your mind is able to track the information they are seeking. Just as they might be able to tell what's inside the box by shaking it around, you can tell what they are trying to figure out, when they shake it." In a series of experiments, the researchers asked hundreds of people to watch others shake boxes. "It took just seconds for most of them to know whether the box shaker was trying to learn either how many things were in the box or the shape of things in the box. Although the boxes weren't presents, and the contents weren't smartwatches, Legos, or Red Ryder BB guns, and if they were, the results would have been the same," the researchers say.

"The way you would shake a present to find out if it's one thing or many things, or if it's a small thing versus a big thing, can be subtly different," says lead author Sholei Croom, a Johns Hopkins graduate student. "But people are amazing at picking up on such subtleties.

Recognizing another person's actions is something we do every day, whether it's

Winterscape



N.N. Sachitanand
Senior Journalist

As Old Sol's warriors beat a retreat Winter's demons overrun the sky Changing the mantle's sulphur glow Into a sickly hue of leaden grey.

And soon launch a flurry of winds, Setting the leaves shivering fearfully, Beasts of prey that stalk the streets Sans moan or whine or revealing rustle.

No armour of clothing invincible is As through chink and hole, gap and rent, Their icy tendrils reach the victim Covering in his insulated sanctum.

Often they are the scythe of Death, Relentlessly attacking the destitute When their pathetic little shield Of a bonfire turns to ashes.

But all is not grim in the season As hot delicacies make a bow And Cupid strikes down inhibitions Of couples cuddling for warmth.



Those Happy Surprises!



Dr. Goutam Sen
CRVS Surgeon,
Traveller,
Storyteller

Last week, after a very long time, three generations of the family sat down to dine together. In addition, we had a couple of visiting cousins whom we had not seen for long. At first, the good meal kept the conversation at low ebb but as we began to be satiated, the conversation began to flow. Thank God, the mobiles had been put away! To begin with, it was catching up. How are the boys? How does an empty nest feel? Physical demands and the need to consult a doctor more frequently was another major topic for us, the older people. Finally, as we became relaxed, the reminiscences began. The happy memories of childhood soon followed with major events in life where all of us had moments to enjoy together.

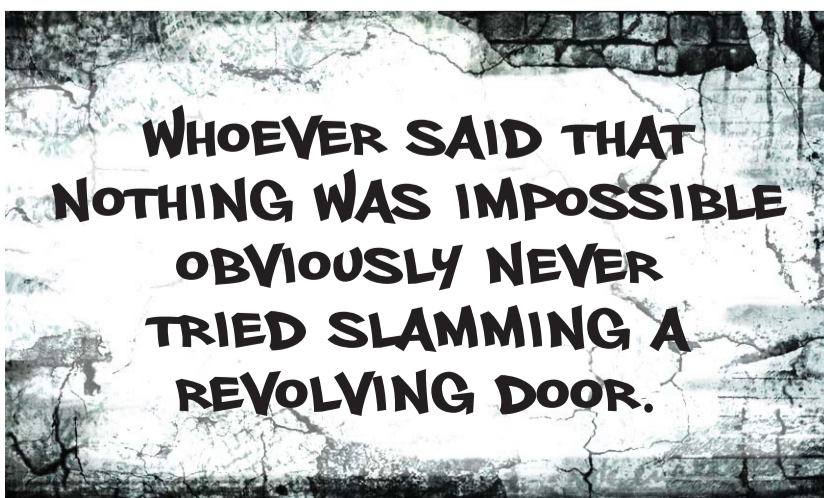
Joya, who was visiting from USA, began to tell us her plans to visit Goa, Kolkata and Darjeeling. She was being asked to keep her visit to her elderly aunt in Kolkata a surprise, that too by her son, who lives in the same flat with his mother. Joya commented that she was not sure if this was a good idea. The aunt has a fixed schedule and often has to go out to visit the doctor and temples. She does some social work too. A surprise visit may play havoc with her schedule. Naturally, the discussion now veered to surprises. On polling the group, there were both sorts of views. While some were happy to be surprised, others were disinclined. They had reservations. Others wanted to qualify the surprise. Bad news was not acceptable while they were game to be surprised with a good gesture even though, it may inconvenience them. For that matter, bad news is always a surprise!

Of course, the inevitable occurred and the question about the best surprises in life had to be talked about. Jayant and Nalini spoke about their 'Silver Wedding Anniversary'. It just happened that their anniversary followed our 50th Wedding Anniversary. They had organised a gala affair for us. They had planned it well with imagination and great enthusiasm. Friends and family from afar and near had been given ample notice. The numbers of acceptance were much higher than anticipated. It was a huge well-orchestrated event at the City Palace in Jaipur. What made it more interesting was that it was



Even today, when they speak about it, there is a happy glow on their faces!

THE WALL



The day arrived. Happy anniversary wishes poured in by social media, text messages and mobile calls. Some intimate friends called in bearing gifts. They had been warned not to talk about the evening's programme. The first problem that cropped up was that Jayant and Nalini were showing no signs of going to work, that morning. Surabhi began signaling anxiously that they should be sent to work forthwith as the caterers and the decorators were due any minute. If the work force was seen, the whole surprise would be spoilt. Somehow, we managed to get them to work and started setting up the place at high speed for the evening event. By five o'clock, all was ready. We had even prepared placards with *Happy Anniversary* signs. When Jayant and Nalini entered the compound in the evening, the surprise was total!

#FAMILY

When the grandchildren asked about Jayant and Nalini's Silver wedding anniversary celebrations, we realised that no plans had been made for it. Fortunately, Surabhi and Sukriti were enthusiastic and said that they could do a gala event in our front lawns. With the venue issue solved, we gave them a go ahead with a carte blank. Within two days, all was ready. The menu was selected and the caterers were booked.

being held in an inner courtyard for the first time.

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Nirmal and I had no special plans for our 40th wedding anniversary. Since anniversary day is a national holiday, we had planned to have a family meal at the new restaurant on Jacob Road in the Civil Lines. Their *Keema Baiti* was famous. The time had arrived. We piled into the car. When we crossed the railway bridge on Ajmer road, we had to turn left for the restaurant. Instead, Jayant turned the car to the right. I looked at him questioningly. He casually mentioned that

A week ago, as we sat down for



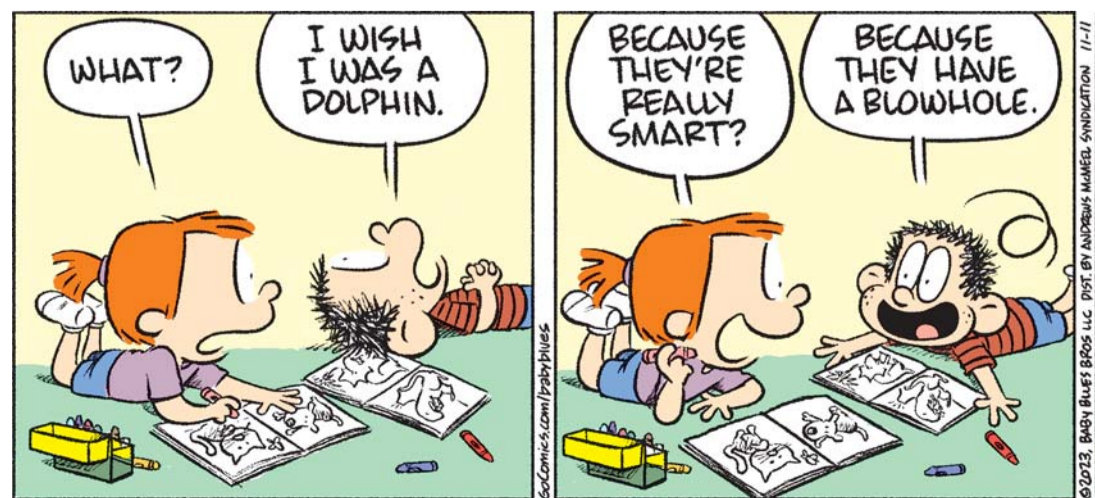
Fan and fan from Mandira Bird Paradise.

he had to pick up an item from the Jaipur Club. He stopped the car at the decorated gate to the side lawn and it dawned upon us that a surprise celebration had been arranged. All friends and family were there. Even people who had spoken on the phone in the morning were smiling away at the complete surprise that they had achieved. The happy memories and the surprise have lasted all these years.

Surprises do not have to be big events.

A week ago, as we sat down for

BABY BLUES



Timing of surprises is very important. A surprise party may disrupt an already planned event. Appearing at someone's home unannounced can be very double-edged. At those times, it is wise to consult another member of the family to see that all is hunky-dory. Surprise can backfire because of lack of information. Bringing a surprise dish that contains nuts can be quite distressing for people who are allergic.

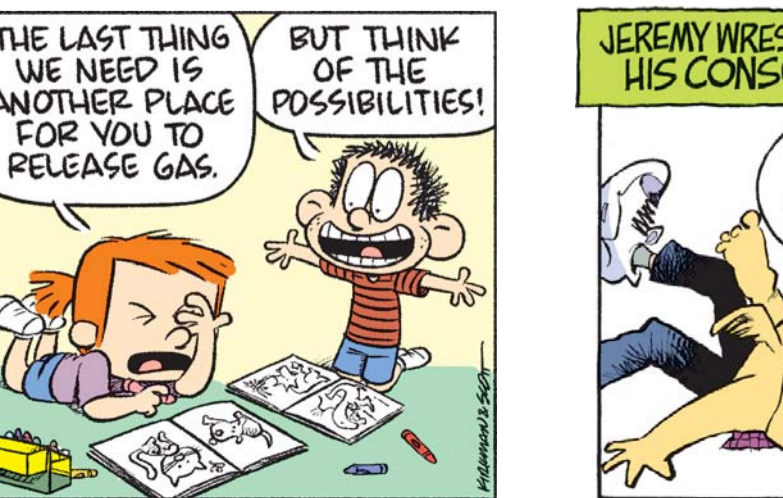
The desire to make them happy. Just to make sure, it is wise to have a backup plan. It also is an indication about how well you know them. The gift has to be chosen not only because it is good but also, how well it will be appreciated. For example, I have a cousin who loves fountain pens. The other day, I presented a *Mont Blanc* pen to him. Although he had many, he was overjoyed to add one more to his collection. When one is not sure of what gift is to be given to a person, who seems to have everything, it is always safe to go for a simple thing like a perfume or a knick-knack. Here, the item, though good is not as important as the effort.

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ZITS



#INSIGHT

Merry Christmas

Christmas has a magical way of bringing out the best in us

Merry Christmas 2023 Traditions and History: It's that wonderful time of the year again as the festivity of the most awaited festivals around the globe has begun! Everywhere you go, you'll find Christmas trees and twinkling lights, turning red and green into our favourite colours.



The air is filled with the aroma of delicious Christmas cakes and the excitement of unwrapping festive gifts. Christmas has a magical way of bringing out the best in us, and it's all for the right reasons.

What is the History and origin of Christmas?

Christmas, rooted in Christian tradition, celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. Originating in the 4th century, the date was set on December 25 to coincide with pagan festivals. Over time, diverse cultures incorporated customs like gift-giving and feasts. In the Middle Ages, caroling gained popularity, spreading joy. The Puritans frowned upon festivities, but by the Victorian era, Christmas trees and cards became widespread. In the 20th century, commercialism surged, shaping the modern celebration. Today, Christmas unites people globally, transcending religious boundaries, as families gather, exchange gifts, and partake in festive cheer, symbolizing love, kindness, and joy.



What is the significance of Christmas?

Christmas holds immense significance as a joyous celebration worldwide, symbolizing love, peace, and togetherness. It commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ, promoting goodwill and kindness. Families unite, exchanging gifts and relishing festive feasts. Decorations illuminate homes, fostering a warm, festive spirit. Beyond religious connotations, Christmas fosters a universal sense of generosity, encouraging acts of charity and compassion. The holiday season promotes reflection, gratitude, and bonding, emphasizing the importance of spreading happiness.

It's a time when people set aside differences, embracing shared humanity. In essence, Christmas transcends religious boundaries, fostering a global sense of unity, joy, and shared goodwill.

Why is Christmas Celebrated On December 25th?



December 25th is celebrated as Christmas to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. While the exact date of Jesus' birth is not specified in the Bible, December 25th was chosen by early Christians to coincide with pagan winter solstice festivals. This strategic selection aimed to integrate Christianity into existing celebrations, making it more acceptable. Over time, December 25th became widely accepted as Jesus' birthday, leading to the global celebration of Christmas. The festive day emphasizes joy, love, and goodwill, with traditions like gift-giving and festive decorations, fostering a sense of unity and happiness among people worldwide.

How is Christmas Celebrated in India?

Celebrating Christmas in India can be a unique and diverse experience due to the country's rich cultural tapestry. Here are some ways in which you can celebrate Christmas in India:

- In India, Christmas is a relatively small festival compared to other religious celebrations. This is because the percentage of Christians in the country is between 2-3%, which is much lower than the number of followers of other religions. Yet, it is celebrated every year with great pomp and enthusiasm across the country.
- Mumbai has one of the biggest Christian communities in India and most them follow the Roman Catholic faith. A significant number of Christians in Mumbai trace their origins back to Goa. Additionally, the north-eastern states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram have substantial Christian populations.
- Midnight Mass is a significant part of Christmas celebrations in India. Many churches hold special services on Christmas Eve, starting around midnight. Attendees participate in prayers, carol singing, and the festive mass. Gift-giving is a common Christmas tradition. Exchange gifts with family and friends as a way of expressing love and joy.
- Instead of using traditional Christmas Trees, some folks opt for decorating a banana or mango tree or any tree they can find! At times, people even use mango leaves to adorn their homes during the festive season.
- A delightful tradition known as *consuada* involves families making an array of sweets before Christmas and sharing them with friends and neighbours. Many Christian households also feature a nativity scene adorned with clay figures, adding a touch of tradition to their festive celebrations.

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

