

# Opinion: The best gift you can give your child this year isn't wrapped in paper — it is the paper

To a child, a parent on a smartphone is a mystery — they don't know if you're reading or doomscrolling. The visible literacy of a print newspaper instantly changes that dynamic and invites connection

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We often talk about the “second life” of a newspaper during the holidays. We

love the rustic look of gifts wrapped in yesterday's headlines or the sustainability of recycling newsprint into DIY snowflakes and stars. But while a newspaper makes for excellent eco-friendly wrapping, its most powerful function isn't what it covers up — it's what it opens up.

If you are raising young children or teens, the most valuable gift you can give them this year is one that keeps arriving on your doorstep: a print newspaper subscription.

We are living through a quiet crisis of focus. Recent data confirms a worrisome trend: [Reading proficiency](#) is sliding, and the time children spend reading for fun drops off a cliff between the ages of 9 and 13. Why? Because the screens in their pockets are winning the war for their attention.

When a child scrolls through social media, they are engaging in “fast reading” — short clips and jagged text that fracture their concentration. It does not build the sustained focus or deep vocabulary necessary for success in school and life. We want our children to be deep thinkers, but we are handing them tools designed for shallow distraction.

This is where you, the parent or grandparent, come in. We can't just tell our kids to “get off the phone” if we are constantly on ours.

Think about the dentist's waiting room or the airplane seat of the past. They used to be filled with magazines and newspapers. Today, those spaces are silent, filled with adults hunched over glowing rectangles. To a child, a parent on a smartphone is a mystery. Are they working? Reading the news? Doomscrolling? It all looks the same: disconnected and unavailable.

A print newspaper changes the dynamic instantly. It is visible literacy.

When you spread a newspaper out on the kitchen table, you are sending a

clear, visible signal to your children: *Reading is something we do here. Reading is how we understand the world.* You become the role model they need. You are demonstrating that information is worth slowing down for, worth holding in your hands and worth paying attention to.

Digital media is like a silo; a print paper is communal. You can't easily share an article on your phone with a child across the table without breaking the flow. But with a paper? You can physically hand them the Arts section. You can point to a photo. You can laugh at a headline together.

And don't worry if they don't jump straight into the editorials. The comics, the sports scores and the puzzles are the gateway to literacy. If a spread-out paper catches your teenager's eye because of a funny cartoon, that is a victory. It builds the habit of engaging with print every single day.

In a world of clickbait and algorithmic feeds designed to make us angry or anxious, a curated print newspaper offers something rare: a shared reality. It connects your family to your local community and the wider world in a way that a personalized feed never can.

So this holiday season, by all means, wrap your gifts in newsprint. It looks great. But make sure you keep the subscription active long after the ornaments are packed away. A newspaper on the breakfast table is more than just news; it is a daily invitation for your children to unplug, focus and join the conversation.