



*A look at some of the most popular technology gifts this Christmas  
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Happy Holidays!*

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## Day 11 – Smartphone Virtual Reality Headsets

*This article explains the new product that has been flying off store shelves this Christmas and bringing Low Cost Virtual Reality to everyone.*

### Introduction:

You may be wondering why this year you are not seeing the ever popular phenomenon of 3D television and devices as you did last year, where almost every HDTV had a very expensive 3D option, and either you had to buy expensive Wireless Active 3D glasses or if you owned a Passive 3D HDTV you could even use the inexpensive 3D glasses used by the Movie Theatres. I believe that the reason these are not on the radar this year is because of a paradigm shift in the 3D Experience to Virtual Reality, and the use of VR headsets that put you inside the action, right in the middle in a 360 degree interactive world as an active participant, not just as a spectator, and a view like nothing you have experienced before.



### First came Google Cardboard:

Google came out with the first Smartphone VR App and device called Google Cardboard, named because the device was literally made of cardboard and two concave plastic lens. Intended on being inexpensive enough to bring VR to everyone, these cardboard headsets were very basic, and not very pretty or great for extended periods of use as the user had to hold them up with their hands since they lacked head straps. These cost between **\$10 to \$20 CDN**.



### The Next Generation of 3D VR Headsets:

You may be aware of the ever popular VR Headset for the PC called the “The Oculus Rift”. If not, I recommend looking it up. We previously wrote an [article](#) on it as well. The project started with a Kickstarter funding campaign in 2012 where it raised US \$2.5 million. In March 2014, Facebook purchased Oculus for US \$2 billion, and in March 2016 the Oculus Rift was released. Currently it sells for about **\$800 CDN**. There have been several model revisions since development and it will likely continue to evolve, but the design of the Oculus and its popularity have widely inspired the direction of VR headset designs.





## The Sony PlayStation 4 VR:

Even the mainstream Game consoles have not been able to ignore the tsunami of VR interest and recently Sony announced the release of its own 3D VR headset for use with its PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 4 Pro. They have also released a line of VR titles for exclusive use with it. The Sony PlayStation VR currently sells for about **\$600 CDN**.



## Back to the Inexpensive Smartphone VR Headsets

### Mattel's View Master VR:

If you have ever been a kid in the last several decades, odds are that you grew up with those amazing Mattel View Master Goggles where you bought those little 3D movie image discs and were able to see amazing 3D pictures. Well, View Master is still in the game and has easily made the leap to VR with the View Master VR viewer, and it has a twist. Now you can also purchase discs that add the element of Augmented Reality to the experience. They still look very much like the original toy did with the unmistakable Red colour, but now you just add your Smartphone and the free app from the Google or Apple Store and you are ready to go. The consumer reviews have been very good, scoring an average of 4.5 out of 5, and it may have something to do with the focus on the children's market. The only drawback is that they do not have a head strap to keep them in place and need to be held up by hand. They can currently be purchased in stores and off their website for about **\$30 CDN**.



### All the other Smartphone VR Headsets:

Everywhere you look today, chances are you will find that nearly every major brand is making a Virtual Reality headset for their own Smartphone line, Google has recently released the DayDream VR, Samsung the Gear VR, LG the 360 VR, and the list goes on. These units usually run from about **\$100 CDN** to **\$300 CDN** on average. Don't worry there are plenty of lesser known generic brands out there as well that are well under the \$100 price point, starting at about **\$20 CDN** and up. If you are an Apple iPhone user, don't worry, the Apps and headsets are out there for Apple too. In fact many headsets work with both Android and Apple Smartphones.





Samsung  
Gear VR



LG 360 VR



### What Software can I use for the Smartphone VR headsets?

There are currently hundreds of free VR 360 apps that can be downloaded from the Android Store and likely from the Apple Store as well. Some of these apps even allow the user of an external controller to create a more interactive experience. The most amazing experience in my opinion is the ability to view YouTube videos created with VR 360 cameras in VR 360 mode. Even if you do not have a headset you can get the Google Cardboard app and start experiencing the motion sensor movement in the videos, which creates the experience of looking through a movable window on your smartphone, where you can rotate and view the video freely in 360 degrees. However, if you want to really experience being inside the video you need to add the VR headset to take it to a whole new level. Switching to VR mode is just a click of a button on



the YouTube video, and the button is the Google Cardboard icon, which then changes the video to a side-by-side double view with a line down the middle that you line up with your headset.



### VR Headset Accessories:

There are a ton of accessories you can also buy, and some even come bundled with the headsets. Bluetooth controllers, and Bluetooth earphones are the most common.



## Make your own 360 degree VR movies:

You can even make your own HD VR 360 movies, there are many cameras available and usually they are a ball with several camera lenses around the ball. Some vendors like Samsung even have their own that they have added to the VR line but there are plenty of other very Star Wars sci-fi looking multi-eyed robotic cameras out there.



If you are looking to try VR for the first time, go out and grab a \$20 to \$30 unit before they are sold out this holiday season and experience it for yourself before investing in any serious expensive hardware. You will never look at 3D the same again.



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