

Holiday regifting: Do's and Don'ts

Written by Marcia Humphrey
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Did I ever tell you about my favorite Aunt Annie? Many years ago, an older man started calling and coming around to see her. They began what my aunt would call, a friendship, and, what the man would call, a courtship. Before long, he had managed to upgrade his status in her eyes; he was her boyfriend (sort of).

Christmas rolled around and the suitor presented my aunt with a, let's just say, very, very modest engagement ring. I couldn't tell if my aunt was more put off by the size of the ring or by the fact that she was in no way ready to commit to him in marriage. I happened to be visiting that year and when I examined the still-boxed ring, I noticed that the inside was engraved, but not with my aunt's name! She was horrified when I showed her that she had been the victim of a serious crime; regifting—the practice of attempting to pass off a used gift as new or giving a gift to someone that you originally received as a gift, but didn't want. (Needless to say, my aunt did not marry him and the relationship went quickly downhill from there—much to my relief and hers too, I think.)

Most people have strong opinions about regifting; either you love it or hate it. If you are a regular reader, you probably know that I have no problem with it. However, as with everything, there are certain rules of etiquette that should be observed. If this season's gift-giving includes a little regifting, make sure you follow a few simple rules that will save you from potential embarrassment.

Be Sure the Gift is Appropriate—Don't give your 75-year-old grandmother those awful toe-socks that you got from the office party gift-exchange. Save them for your teenage niece or cousin. Also, never, ever give-take regifted lingerie to coworkers. That choice could land you in the unemployment office.

Give Only Brand New, Unused Gifts—The exception would be antique or collector's items, of course. It's not okay, however, to regift a five-piece cologne gift set with half of the shower gel missing-tacky. In addition, be certain to remove any dust that may have accumulated on the item during its time in the regifting section of the closet.

Unwrap and Then Rewrap—Instead of leaving the gift in the original wrapping paper (it still may have the gift tag attached that has your name on it), rewrap it in different paper, or simply use a new gift bag and stuff it with fresh tissue paper. In addition, while you have the item

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unwrapped, examine it to be sure it's still in good shape, with no broken or missing pieces. With clothing, jewelry and photo frames, double-check and be certain that they contain no monograms or engravings.

Gift cards Do Expire—If you have a gift card that you lost last Christmas (before you had a chance to use it) and just found this Christmas, don't be quick to regift it. While the face value on that Visa Gift Card may say \$25, there may only be \$2.50 left on it now. I discovered this lesson the hard way. Some gift cards charge monthly service fees on remaining balances, which is deducted from the card's value. Before giving, call to check the balance.

In an age when most of us have too much stuff, regifting can be a great solution at Christmas and at anytime. In fact, in January, my girlfriend and I plan to have a *Regifting/ Swap Party*. Each person will bring about five new, unwanted items from home (Christmas gifts or otherwise) and “shop” the items brought by the other women. That's what I call a “green” way to shop that saves lots of green (\$)—Recycle, Reduce, Reuse, and Regift. Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at low costs. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.