

Topic: Gift Giving and Receiving

Let's get started...

The winter holiday season is near, and this means that many people in America are giving gifts to their family and friends, and also receiving gifts. Do you give gifts during this season? Have you received any gifts?

Background:

Americans give gifts for many reasons: to celebrate joyful events in life (a special holiday, a new baby, a birthday, a graduation, a wedding, etc;) to express appreciation (to a host, to a friend, or to someone who has done something helpful;) or to promote personal or business relationships.

If you receive a gift, you do not have to give one in return, but it *is* important to say "thank you" to the giver and also to send that person a thank you note. When Americans receive a gift, they usually open it immediately (unless it is a gift for some specific date or occasion.) They may ask, "May I open this now?"

When you give a gift, it is important to think about the following suggestions:

- Try to think of something the person would like to receive.
- Do not make it too expensive. (It may make the receiver feel uncomfortable.)
- Do not make it too personal (underwear, cologne, etc.) unless the person is very close to you.
- If you want to give food or alcohol to someone, first find out about any allergies or dietary restrictions that person might have.

Peter Post, the grandson of a famous author (Emily Post) who wrote about good American manners, says that the most important thing is "giving the gift because it's coming from you and your heart."



In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:

- What is the best gift you have ever received?
- What is the best gift you have ever given?

Share your partner's answers with the group.

Discussion Questions:

In your home country, on what occasions do people give gifts?

In your home country, how do people give gifts? Do they wrap the gifts? Do they send gifts through the mail? Do they put them into the person's hands? When do people open gifts?

Have you ever received a gift that made you feel uncomfortable? What was it? Why did you feel uncomfortable?

In your home country, who do people give gifts to? To family members? To friends? To co-workers or business contacts? To neighbors? To children's teachers?

In your home country, is it common for children to give gifts to their parents? At what age do children start giving gifts?

In your home country, what is a common gift that people give to family members? Is it different from what they give to their friends?

Have you ever received a handmade gift? What was it?
Have you ever made handmade gifts to give to people? Tell about it.

"Coupons" are a popular kind of gift in some families. They are handmade notes offering to do some kind of service or to share an activity. Do people in your home country ever give this kind of gift?

In the United States, some people give food as a gift. They might buy some special food or make homemade jam or cookies. In your home country, is it popular to give food as a gift? Do people give alcohol as a gift?

In your home country, do people give gifts to their bosses? Do bosses give gifts to their staff? If yes, what kind of gifts is common?

In your home country, do people give gifts for weddings or funerals? If so, what kind of gifts? Is money a popular gift? Why or why not?

Have you ever received an anonymous gift? What was it and why did you receive it? Did you ever find out who gave it to you? Have you ever given an anonymous gift? (Tell us about if you can!)

Do you sometimes give surprise gifts -- for "no reason at all?"

In your home country, do some people give gifts in order to get something from someone else -- a job, help, or a date for example?

New words and Idioms: giving, receiving, season, close, thank you note, co-workers, receiver, cologne, handmade, homemade, occasion, anonymous