

# holiday

## tiquette 101

Your guide to negotiating an increasingly complex season of parties, payouts and family gatherings.

BY DAWN E. WARDEN

**Religious beliefs aside**, the holidays boil down to two things: parties and presents. Hopefully you've figured out how things work in your inner circle. But when you step outside of it, you may be expected to play by a different set of rules. In today's fast-paced environment, it's hard to keep up with what's in and what's not, but one thing you can count on is that good manners never go out of style. And with the season upon us, now's the time to brush up. Whether it's the annual holiday party, a co-worker lunch or a sit-down dinner with the boss, **local experts Lisa Richey** (the American Academy of Etiquette in Wayne) **and Liz Stephens** (Feastivities Events in Manayunk) have got you covered. Consider this an investment in your future—one that cements your spot at the top of everyone's invite list.

# 10 RULES TO LIVE BY

**1. It's the thought that counts—really.** No one is going to turn down a lavish gift. But if you want to make a lasting impression, buy something that shows you've spent time assessing the recipient's tastes and style. Send gifts that reflect the recipient's interests, not yours.

**2. And so does the packaging.** If you don't know how to wrap a present with style, find someone who can. Even the simplest gift can be transformed into something more with clever or dressy wrapping. Include a gift receipt—and, please, get rid of the price tag.

**3. When it comes to gift giving at the office, keep it simple.** If you're new on the job and unsure of the gift-giving policy or etiquette, ask around. You don't want to be in a position where you set new trends unilaterally or come off like a Scrooge. Most offices have some type of gift exchange. Unless the recipient is close to you, avoid items that are too personal. Play it safe with books, CDs, candles, food or frames. If your gift is a solo venture, don't call attention to yourself or make a production of it. This includes giving more than you can afford, or handing out gifts in front of others.

**4. For the boss, consider a group gift.** One item from a bunch of employees usually works well. If you do give a group gift, each person should contribute the same amount. If not everyone is thrilled about chipping in, giving individually is OK. A group card can also be a nice gesture. Don't force your boss to use your gift.



Giving something that can be used at home is best. Then your boss won't feel compelled to use or display it in the office. That way, you avoid putting him or her in the potentially awkward situation of identifying the gift-giver. And if your boss surprises *you* with a gift, you don't have to reciprocate. A nice holiday card and a verbal or written "thank you" will more than suffice.

**5. If you're giving gifts to colleagues who are friends, do it outside the office.** You probably already knew this, but we're telling you again.

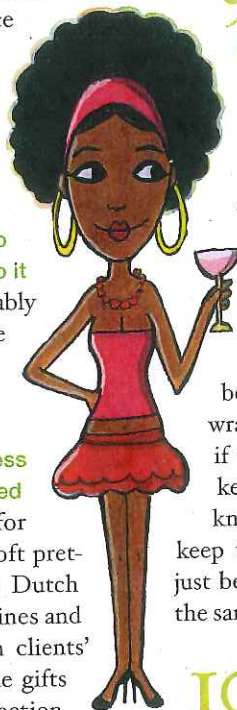
**6. For out-of-town business associates, consider food-related gifts.** We live in a region known for its cheese steaks, mushrooms, soft pretzels, Tastykakes, Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine, artisan cheeses, local wines and more. Keep your company on clients' minds all year long with unique gifts like The Wine Connection ([pawineandspirits.com](http://pawineandspirits.com)), the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board's new wine-of-the-month club.

**7. Delivering a gift in person is a nice touch, but it can also be viewed as an interruption.** Don't put the recipient on the spot by waiting for him/her to open the gift.

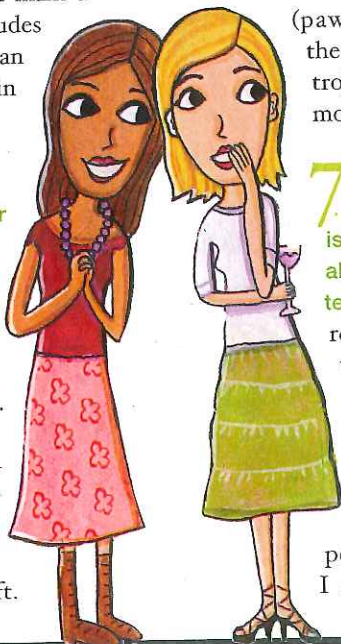
**8. Avoid office party embarrassment.** Now repeat after us: 24 hours a day, I represent the company I

work for. At my holiday party I vow to: wear appropriate attire; stop at two drinks (short event) or pace myself with one drink per hour (longer event); not to gossip or bring up religion or politics; not to spend the morning after repairing my reputation.

**9. Approach re-gifting with caution.** We've all done it, but it's definitely up there on the etiquette taboo list. If it's from your boss, in-laws or anyone else who might expect to see you in/with "the gift," you'd better make an effort to produce it once in a while. However, in due time, you can pass it on—just be sure it meets these requirements: 1) it must be new and in the original box or wrapper with an unbroken seal; 2) if the gift was handmade for you, keep it; 3) the receiver must not know the original giver; 4) if you keep the item until next Christmas, just be sure you don't give it back to the same person.



**10. If you're contemplating hosting your own holiday soiree, don't wait until the last minute.** Invites may come by mail or phone. Due to busy schedules during the holidays, send a "save the date" postcard three to four weeks in advance, followed by the actual invite two or three weeks later. If you're late, a phone call is a much better idea than e-mail. Always make invitations as clear as possible. A few extra minutes spent on this will cut down on phone calls from guests—especially on game day. If you're the one invited, by all means RSVP as soon as possible, and don't spring any last-minute surprises on the host. If you're unsure about whether you can bring a date, just ask. Everyone's an adult. Just don't pose it in a way that's presumptuous.



**holiday tip sheet** Hairdresser: Your normal tip and maybe a small gift or food. Manicurist: \$10-\$20. Teacher: Gift certificate and a small gift from your child. Babysitter: One to two nights' pay plus a small gift from your child. Locker room attendant: \$5-\$10. Personal trainer: \$50. Apartment or office doorman: \$25-\$100. Handyman: \$10-\$30. Childcare provider: \$25-\$70 per provider, plus a gift from your child. Gardener: \$20-\$50. Housekeeper: One day's pay. Mail carrier: Non-cash gift valued at up to \$20. Newspaper carrier: Daily delivery, \$15-\$25; weekends only, \$5-\$15.