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## DOs and DON'Ts at Christmas

**E**ven when you know a lot about traditions in a certain country, there are always some everyday questions which do not have ready answers. When you are invited to someone's home at Christmas, what presents should you give the host and the hostess, if any? Is it appropriate to give Christmas presents to your colleagues and your boss? What is generally considered a good gift? What should you do at Christmas parties and dinners? When and how should you thank for the gifts and invitations received? Here are a few *dos* and *don'ts* at Christmas that may help you to feel more confident.



### Before Christmas

- **Do** send your Christmas cards a few weeks before the day, but not too early.
- **Do** write the address and sign the card in your own handwriting to add a personal touch. Even if you like the preprinted wishes on the card, write a line or two of personal wishes for your friends.
- **Do** include your own address: some people carefully keep track of who sends them cards so as not to miss them out next year.
- **Do not** send a Christmas card to someone who is not a Christian. Go for a Season's Greetings card instead.

### At Christmas

- **Do** prepare your presents beforehand. Make sure they are not too expensive, as expensive presents are inappropriate. Among good presents some polls list gift certificates/vouchers, homemade Christmas dishes, some money (20–30 pounds) and, in general, whatever the recipient likes. Among the worst gifts listed were fleece blankets, ugly ties, cowboy boots, decorative items for the house, pets, a bar of soap, canned food, socks, a bottle of vitamins and a plastic duck.
- **Do not** ever make suggestive presents like a weight-loss dietary supplement or a book of etiquette.
- **Do** bring a bottle of good wine and flowers and/or a box of chocolates for the host and the hostess if you're invited to someone's place for Christmas dinner.
- **Do not** give a present to your boss unless you've worked together for several years or it is a group gift. Separate presents may look like an attempt to curry favour.
- **Do not** make any personal gifts to your colleagues unless you know them very well. In many offices there is a popular way of giving presents that is called "Secret Santa". A couple of weeks before Christmas the names of everyone in the office are written on slips of paper and put in a hat or a box. Then everyone pulls a slip of paper out and buys an anonymous present for that person. In this way everyone gets a present but has no idea who it is from.
- **Do** pull a cracker at Christmas dinner and read out the joke that is inside. Most jokes are silly (e.g. "What are the wettest animals in the world? — Reindeer"), but they are still very popular. After that people do the paper crowns from the crackers and proceed to their dinner.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

In Britain, according to the Holy Days and Fasting Days Act of 1551 that has not yet been repealed, every citizen must attend a Christian church service on Christmas Day, and must not use any kind of vehicle to get to the service.

### After Christmas

- **Do** write a thank you note to thank for the gifts you've received or the party/dinner that you've attended in the next few days after the event. You only need to write a couple of sentences, but do that fast.
- **Do not** forget to look back at Christmas and think of what a great time you've had.

