

## A guide to gifts for co-workers

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Each holiday I am usually very good at drafting my gift list. I match my loved ones with gifts that I think are perfect for them, not gifts they need but gifts they want.

So instead of giving my nephew school clothes, he gets toy trucks. So just when I thought my list was done — I forgot one key group — my office co-workers. They are always the most difficult group for me to shop for. I don't know them as well as my family and friends. Also — what do you get the mailroom clerk or your CEO boss? A bad gift could mean you never get your mail again or worse, you get shunned in the hunchroom.

Through years of trial and error, observance and some good common sense, I now tackle it with the same ease and joy that I do choosing my tree.

Hopefully you know the hobbies and personality traits of your co-workers. "A gift is a reflection of yourself," according to Sarah Weidman, author of "Gifted: 1000 Gift Ideas For Everyone In Your Life" (Penguin). "What you give them shows how much you pay attention to what they say on a personal level."

A good rule of thumb is to set a limit of \$15 per gift. It may sound challenging to find new and exciting gifts under \$15 but like searching through the forest of cut pines for the perfect tree, it's both fun and rewarding to find a gift your colleagues will like. Otherwise you can do what was done in my office. Everyone writes on a chart what they absolutely do not want to receive! We call it the "Don't Waste Your Money List."

Here are a few of my recent gift finds for \$15 or under which are sure to impress any coworker:

■ **Cable Turtles:** Most computer cable hiders are ugly and awkward, these are stylish and fun and come in multiple colors. \$4.99 to \$9.99 at [www.cableorganizer.com](http://www.cableorganizer.com).

■ **Invisible Bookshelf:** An innovative, floating bookshelf that disappears through the magic of a book illusion. Each shelf holds up to 15 pounds. \$15 at [www.chiasso.com](http://www.chiasso.com).

■ **Wine Thermometer:** This cuff hugs a bottle and displays the temperature. Check the reading against the included guide to know when it's at optimal serving temperature. Available at [www.mxyplyzyk.com](http://www.mxyplyzyk.com) for \$12.95.

■ **Paperweight Decision Maker:** Spin this silver tone weight for advice when you're stuck. There are eight answers ranging from yes, no, to pass the buck. \$15 at <http://store.unusualthings.biz>

■ **Handyman In Your Pocket:** Chock full of pro tips and perfect for a colleague who is a new or first time homeowner. \$12.95 from [www.restorationhardware.com](http://www.restorationhardware.com).

Some presents are best avoided such as gag gifts. "Respect religious and cultural traditions," adds Weidman who also suggests staying away from clothing, heavily scented items and anything that can be construed as intimate. Certain food items, such as meat or liquor, shouldn't be given unless you are certain the person enjoys them. And if you're new to your workplace ask about the existing traditions in your department, including a dollar limit.

Finally, in the spirit of the season, it's improper that anyone ever feels pressured to exchange gifts in the workplace, regardless of tradition. Accept that not everyone is able or would like to participate but if you are going to give, always give cheerfully.