

Avoiding the three-toaster syndrome: Tips for gifts

By NC News Service

As mercenary as the idea may seem at first, the practice of registering at stores to express preference for particular wedding gifts helps not only those who get the gifts, but also those who buy them.

For recipients, registration is the best way to reduce the possibility of receiving three toasters, five clocks or a silver "silent butler" which requires polishing even though it may never be used.

For givers, registration provides a way to be sure that the gift being selected is really wanted and not something that will quickly be taken back to the store to be exchanged.

It doesn't cost a cent to register. All a couple must do is visit the store and fill out forms specifying their preference in gifts, including their favorite colors or patterns or styles. The store records every purchase and updates the "wish list."

It's possible to register at more than one store, just as long as the couple keeps each store informed of purchases

made elsewhere. They also must inform the stores when they receive gifts from other sources.

While registration may be regarded as a means of receiving place settings of china, crystal or silver, such expensive gifts need not be listed at all. In fact, the couple who receives two or three place settings and can't afford to complete the set is far better off with a less expensive and more useful gift.

Those who give showers for the bride can mention the places of registry on the shower invitation and friends and relatives can spread the word. Lest she be considered a crass materialist, however, the bride doesn't mention the registry unless she is asked.

Many of the things to do and not do regarding wedding gifts are not only matters of good taste but also have their roots in Christian charity.

First, some advice for the gift receivers and then for the gift givers.

For the bride and groom:

1. Don't invite people you hardly know to the wedding. Invite those

whose presence you enjoy — and never because you expect them to give you a gift.

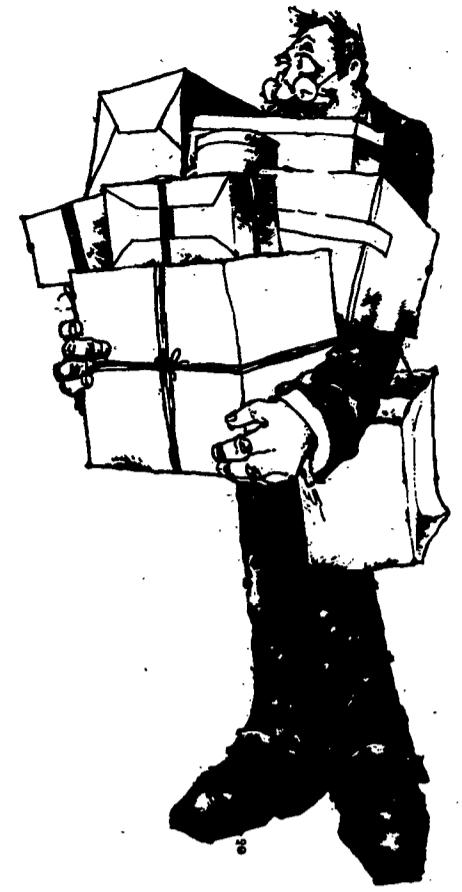
2. Get a notebook and list every gift, who sent it, the date received and a brief description of the item. As gifts arrive, acknowledge them immediately. A "thank you" note for "the lovely gift" is too vague. Mention the gift specifically.

3. Thanking the giver personally at a shower or reception isn't enough. Write a note of appreciation afterward.

4. If a gift is broken in the mail, look for an insurance stamp on the package. If it's insured, tell the giver, so it can be replaced. Otherwise, don't inform someone their gift was broken, unless they inquire. It will make them feel they must buy you a second present.

5. Attendance at a shower requires a gift. Thus, it's inconsiderate to invite the same person to three or four showers.

6. If you display your gifts, do so at home, and not at a public reception. The display should be arranged in a way not



to invite comparisons of the value of gifts. If checks are displayed, make sure that the giver's name is covered up. If you get duplicate presents, display only one of each.

7. If you exchange a gift for any reason, there is no obligation to inform the giver.

8. If you receive an unwanted gift, don't put it aside and later give it to another couple as a wedding present. They may not like it either. Exchange it.

9. If you have a relative or close friend who can ill afford a gift, don't ignore them because of their financial status. Invite them and specify on the invitation: "No gifts, please."

10. If you break your engagement, return the gifts — even those that are monogrammed.

Here are some tips for gift givers.

1. Ask almost any married couple and they will tell you that among the greatest presents are those which can't be purchased in a store — gifts which you have made yourself.

2. A gift of money is useful and appreciated. The check should be made out to both bride and groom.

3. The amount of a monetary gift depends on your financial means and your closeness to the bride or groom or both. Such gifts might range from \$10 by a co-worker at the office to several hundred dollars from parents and other relatives.

4. Find out from the couple's relatives if the couple has registered at a store.

5. Overcome the temptation to buy a department store special. It could be embarrassing if several others decide on the same bargain.

6. Sign the card accompanying the gift with your full name. A couple may have real difficulty identifying the source of a shower gift from "Ann" or "Mary."

7. If after two months you haven't received a "thank you" note, inquire if the couple received your gift. It may have been lost in the mail.

8. If you receive a wedding invitation but are not invited to the reception, no gift is expected.

Whether you are on the giving or receiving end, a gift is a material, impermanent possession. No matter how useful, it won't last forever. What's really important is that however large or small, the present symbolizes your affection and good wishes for the newly-marrieds.

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