



**COMMON HOLIDAY-RELATED  
DILEMMAS AND TIPS ON HOW TO  
POLITELY PREVAIL.**

*Holiday Season  
Perspectives*

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## INTRODUCTION

Holiday get-togethers have a different meaning for everyone. Some of us look forward to these holiday gatherings all year. While others, for a variety of reasons, dread it.

This year, may be a bit different due to ongoing concerns about "flu season" and the protocols, we may or may not follow. This adds another layer of potential conflict.

And then there are cultural customs and traditions that can cause awkwardness, embarrassing situations, and even cause offense. That is why informing guests in advance of any unique and specific protocols, will make the experience more enjoyable for everyone.

In this e-book, I'll address a variety of common dilemmas like, how to respond to prying questions, how much to spend if you're in a new relationship, and many others.

The options and tips I offer is not a one-size-fits all. There are many circumstances to consider. My hope is that these general tips and advice, inspire you to consider the circumstances before blowing up at someone. It usually isn't worth losing your dignity, or the relationship.

*NOTE: My tips are not a substitute for addressing serious conflicts or potentially violent behavior. Use common sense. Sometimes the best and safest option is to avoid a situation.*

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## INVITATIONS



**Q: I haven't been sober for too long. Going to a holiday party now isn't advised by my sponsor. How do I decline an invitation without explaining?**

**A:** Simple answer, "Thanks for the invitation, but I won't be able to make it. Have a great time, and I'll see you after the holidays." If they ask or insist, repeat. If you are okay with a "white lie" you can tell them that you have a prior commitment. Which can be truthful. Your commitment is to avoid parties that serve alcohol. While honesty is the best policy, your personal health and privacy comes first!

**Q: My partner and I want to host a New Year's party, but want to keep it small. How do I avoid hurting some of our friends' feelings?**

**A:** You have no control how people will react. Here are a couple of options:

- Host two parties. Host a brunch the following week inviting those who you didn't invite.
- Don't post tons of photos on social media. (This might be difficult to impose on your guests.)
- Be honest. Tell everyone that it is a difficult decision. Ask for their understanding.

**Q: I'm hosting Christmas dinner, can I require proof of vaccination of my guests?**


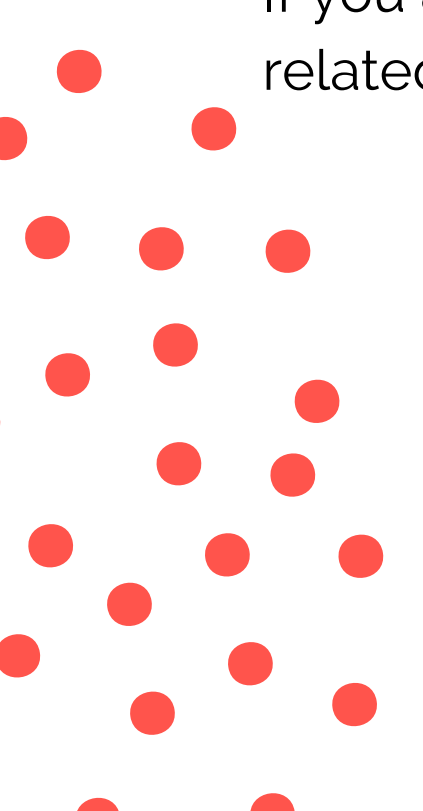
**A:** My simple answer is, your house, your rules. My main considerations would be:

- What is your purpose in requiring this?
- Did you include your protocols in the invitation? This also includes your rules on: children, pets, removal of shoes.
- Are you willing to un-invite them, or turn them away at the door if they don't have proof?
- Will you show them proof of your vaccination?

If you and/or anyone living in your household have anxieties or concerns, you might consider postponing your gathering.

**Advice for Hosts:** Expect last-minute cancellations. Be sure to include any specific protocols in the invitation. This allows guests to decide prior to submitting their RSVP, eliminating awkward conversations.

**Advice for Guests:** If you are cancelling at the last-minute, call the host and apologize. If you aren't sure of protocols relating to face coverings, proof of vaccinations, dietary-related restrictions, politely inquire prior to RSVP date.



## GIFT-GIVING AND RECEIVING

**Q: I hate receiving regifted gifts. It's an easy way out. No thought goes into the gift. Is there anyway to let people know this?**

**A:** Letting people know how you feel about regifting, is your choice. However, I strongly recommend that:

- You are certain it is a regifted-gift.
- Sure that although it was regifted, that it wasn't heartfelt
- Sure that it won't embarrass them having to disclose their private circumstances.

There are many reasons people regift, like:

- They can't use it, but know that you'd like it.
- It's an eco-friendly option.
- Their financial situation prohibits them from spending money.
- They think it's fun to give something out of the ordinary.

*At the risk of sounding corny, it's the thought that counts. Be gracious when you receive a gift. Whether it's expensive and new, or a modest homemade item.*

When you regift, put some thought into it. For example:

- A monthly "sausages-from-around-the-world" = for a vegetarian.
- Lose-weight-fast cookbook = for someone who considers themselves over-weight.
- Political, religious, controversial-related books = for someone who has opposing views.

**Q: I'm always concerned that I'll receive an unexpected gift from someone and I won't have one for them. Should I have some generic gifts or gift cards with me to hand out?**

**A:** If handing out a generic gift feels right for you, then do it. However, it will probably come across as a "payback gift". That wouldn't be sincere.

You could accept the gift graciously, "Thank you. It's so thoughtful." Don't follow it up with, "I left your gift at home."

Reasons why people give gifts without expecting one in return:

- It is an expression of gratitude. Maybe for a kind word or gesture; for helping them out during the year.
- They had a great year and feel like being generous.
- It's what they did at their last place of employment.

### **MORE THINGS TO CONSIDER:**

**Personal:** When giving a gift, keep in mind the familiarity of the relationship. Coworker, boss, or acquaintance, avoid gifts that are personal (bath/hygiene products, anything sexy...)

**Expensive:** If you receive an expensive gift, you don't have to monetarily match it. Keep to your budget. If you feel comfortable accepting the gift, write a thank-you note genuinely expressing your gratitude for their generosity. You might take them out for a coffee or lunch upon returning from the holidays.

## ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

**Q: I just started dating this guy, should I buy him a gift? How much should I spend?**

**A:** Gift giving is tricky around any holiday when you've just started dating.

- You can discuss it. This does take away a bit of the surprise, but at least you know what to expect. You can agree to no-gifts. Plan a day-drive to a fun destination, or cooking together.
- You can buy a one-size-fits-all gift. For example, candles, beverage of choice, games, certificate to a car detail...
- You might want to avoid anything too pricey. It could make them feel that their gift is inadequate, or that you are extravagant and have high expectations.
- Give it to them in private, just in case they don't have one for you. And if they don't, don't read into. If everything else in the relationship is good, don't freak out over this one thing.

**Q: I've wanted to break up with my girlfriend for a few months now, but every time I plan on it, there's a holiday, event, or birthday that keeps me from doing it. I can't fake it through another holiday. What is the best way to break up?**

**A:** It might feel like you were doing the "right thing" by hanging on for just one more event, but, having postponed the inevitable will probably be a bigger shock to her heart.

Have you dropped hints about your dissatisfaction with the relationship? Did you give her a chance to talk about it? Either way, you could have picked a less significant holiday to break up.

There is no one-size-fits-all plan of action. Consider how you'd like someone to break up with you. Here are a few suggestions:

- Don't wait any longer.
- Don't buy her an expensive gift to serve as a token of apology or to soothe her heart. (Unless she's materialistic, it could help )
- Don't make excuses or blame her or the events for having postponed the break up. It was your choice.
- Do take responsibility and sincerely apologize for the timing.
- Do thank her for the good times you had together.
- Do wish her well.
- Don't get mad if she doesn't receive your news well or forgive you.
- Don't post or respond to any social media comments. Maintain your dignity and respect for what was.

### RELATIONSHIP STATUS:

- Are their emotions or level of commitment the same as yours?
- Maybe their budget doesn't allow for extravagant gifts.
- Their upbringing may influence how much importance they put into holiday spending.



## Q: How can you reply to nosy questions without being rude?

**A:** Is it grandma asking, a concerned auntie, or a mere acquaintance? If it's a close family member, you may want to reply in a sweeter kinder way than you would to a distant relative or neighbor.

Here are some awkward nosy questions and a couple of responses:

1. "When are you two getting married?"  
a) When one of us asks the other.      b) We'll let you know.
2. "Oh, you're still single?"  
a) Yes, and thoroughly enjoying it!      b) Yes, I like variety.
3. "Don't tell me you're still into (vegan, 'that religion', that job, etc.)"  
a) Yes, I am, thanks for asking.      b) Yes, I am. How are you doing?

Naturally, you have the option and right to say, "None of your business." But it doesn't sound as polite.

## Q: My brother in-law took a gourmet cooking class. Since then he thinks he's a chef. He hangs out in the kitchen taste-testing my food and offering advice. It drives me crazy! How can I ask him to butt out?

**A:** Many of us have a friend or family member who believes they're an "expert" in everything! If you know this about them, find a way to work around it. Because it is very unlikely that they will change.

Here are a few ideas to help you work around it:

- Ask him to bring their favority dish.
- Invite him to bring his recipe and ingredients to make a dish (one that you're okay letting go of).
- Tell him that you appreciate his tips, but this year you're sticking to your menu and recipes.
- Ask a family member or friend to keep him out of the kitchen.

## PARTY DO'S AND DON'TS

- Don't use someone's party to make a personal announcement like, "We're getting divorced." "We're getting married." (Ask the host in advance whether they're open to it.)
- Don't criticize the host's decor, food, children, etc.
- Don't get drunk. This affects everyone, and ruins the evening.
- Don't bring uninvited guests. (In some cultures, bringing extra people is not unusual.)
- Do bring a "hostess" gift or send something post party.
- Do excuse yourself if a conversation starts to get heated.



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**Books:** Available on Amazon and Barnes and Noble

"Don't Burp in the Boardroom-How to handle uncommonly common workplace dilemmas"

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