

Secret Santa

This common type of exchange begins long before the party starts. It helps you get to know the other party goes a bit better and break the ice. It works great for office parties and smaller social gatherings.

1. Ask everyone who RSVPs for the party if they would like to participate in the gift exchange. The easiest way to do this is by e-mail, or if this is an office party, by putting a sign-up sheet in the break room.
2. Tell each person who would like to participate to provide a list of three things he or she would like, and give a price limit, such as \$30. This helps people who have no idea what to buy and prevents people from giving or receiving bad Christmas presents.
3. Compile a spreadsheet of participants and their gift preferences. Cut the spreadsheet into strips and place the strips in a hat or bowl.
4. Using a second copy of the spreadsheet, number participants, starting with one. Number one gets matched with the first person you draw out of the hat, and so on, until all the names have been drawn. Redraw if a person gets matched with himself or herself.
5. E-mail all participants separately to let them know who they are matched with and what that person requested. Tell them not to reveal their matches!
6. At the party, have everyone place their wrapped gift for their matches under the tree, with the "to" part of the gift tag filled out but the "from" part left blank.
7. Have participants open their gifts one at a time. After each gift is opened, have the person guess who his or her "Secret Santa" is. Those who guess correctly win a small prize, such as a bottle of lotion or a candle.