

Official White Elephant Gift Exchange Rules



A **White Elephant Gift Exchange** is a popular Christmas event where people vie to walk away with the best present. It also goes by *Yankee Swap*, *Dirty Santa*, and a plethora of other names. Here are the basic rules:

1. Each player brings one wrapped gift to contribute to a common pool
2. Players draw numbers to determine what order they will go in
3. The first player selects a gift from the pool and opens it
4. The following players can choose to either pick an unwrapped gift from the pool or steal a previous player's gift. Anyone who gets their gift stolen in this way can do the same – choose a new gift or steal from someone else.

To keep things moving along, there are a couple of limits on gift swapping:

- A present can only be stolen once per turn, which means players who have a gift stolen from them have to wait to get it back.
- After three swaps, the turn automatically comes to an end (otherwise things could drag on for a *long* time).

5. After all players have had a turn, the first player gets a chance to swap the gift he or she is holding for any other opened gift. Anyone whose gift is stolen may steal from someone else (as long as that person hasn't been stolen from yet). When someone declines to steal a gift, the game comes to an end.

Here are some characteristics to look for **when looking for a gift to bring to your White Elephant Gift Exchange party:**

Funny. Funny gifts make the biggest splash at the party, but aren't always the most desirable items for swapping.

Weird. Weird artwork and gadgets are also popular at Christmas gift swaps, and are often highly sought after.

Nice. There's nothing wrong with buying a genuinely nice gift, especially since it has the potential to fuel a lot of competition during the game.

In short, there's a place for all sorts of different items in a gift exchange. But if there's one quality that all gifts should have, it's that they should be *interesting*.