

CAN THIS BE LOVE?

**GIVE HIM A GIFT
HE'LL ALWAYS
REMEMBER—
not one that's
too awful to forget**

Trying to pick out the perfect present for a man can make the holidays seem as joyous as a stay in the hospital for nonelective surgery. If you're lucky, you live with one of those oddballs who's happy with almost anything you get him as long as it's just like what he already has. My friend Sue's husband is like that, and she's considering my suggestion that she buy a dozen of the same shirts this Christmas and cut down on her shopping for the next eleven years.

But Sue has it easier than most of us, for whom divining the right present for our partners seems to require the talent and energy

of a medium seeking the revelation of a soul from the other side. It is for us that I've prepared the following list of DOS and DON'TS aimed at making the task a little easier.

DO learn from your mistakes. If you recently found the sequined cowboy belt you bought him last year stuffed in the back of the linen closet inside a box marked "Danger, Explosives," think twice before you go ahead and buy him silver shoelaces this year. If his response to his last birthday present, a combination pocket knife and flashlight, was a remark about how handy it would come in the next time he got the urge to whittle in the dark, stay away from the automatic pencil sharpener/music box you had in mind for Christmas.

DON'T overlook his reactions to what other men get as gifts from their mates. If he rolled his eyes in horror when his friend Marty got a chef's hat, perhaps you'd better cross the set of potholders that say "Hot Stuff" off your Christmas list. If he shook his head in pity when his friend Cliff was given a pair of tickets to the ballet, then you might reconsider your plans to surprise him with front row seats to a performance of *Medea*.

DO notice what catches his eye. If he walks briskly past the windows of clothing boutiques, but stares lovingly into hardware

stores displaying matched sets of drill bits, you might want to think about deleting "designer silk shirt" from your shopping list and substituting "anodized metal tool box." If he can't stop fingering his friend's new watch, the one that tells the time, date, longitudinal whereabouts and leagues below sea level of its wearer, then consider pulling the friend aside and making him an offer he can't refuse. (Of course, if the only things that seem to catch your partner's eye are tall blondes in slit skirts, then you might have to forego this particular method.)

DO suggest possible presents for your partner without seeming to do so. You might suggest, for instance, that he'd look wonderful in a Japanese kimono and that the zip-out lining of his raincoat isn't really the most suitable bathrobe. Of course, if he replies that he'd as soon be seen in a Japanese kimono as he would in one of your dresses, try another suggestion. Possibly you could wonder aloud as to whether he might not enjoy a subscription to *The Saturday Review of Literature*, that is if he isn't worried about it crushing his copies of *Penthouse* and *Playboy* in the mailbox.

DO listen to the clues he gives you in his general conversation. Has he told you more than once the pathetic story of how his mother never let him have a set of electric trains because she was frightened that he might electrocute himself? Does he recall often and lovingly the beer he drank when he was stationed in Texas, a brand that nobody seems to sell outside Lubbock? Does he, on seeing a set of glass-cutting tools advertised on television, sit up alertly and say, "I bet I could handle those." Be glad he's hinting at what he wants and that he's not leaving you without a clue to his heart's desire. He's probably glad that *you* pointed out to *him* the interesting article reporting conclusive proof that animal fur keeps people warmer than any other material, and that it is especially effective if worn from the shoulders to the ankles in the form of a coat.

DON'T try to improve him with your gift. People tend to resent a present when they sense an ulterior motive. That is why the following gifts were not popular with their recipients: a membership in a health club for older gentlemen; a book of diet tips for a heavy beer drinker; a twelve-hour lecture series given by a NOW luminary on the practical and ethical bases for male-female equality; a leather-bound accounts ledger specially designed to enable even the most financially backward to balance the checkbook; a board game called "Tub-O-Lard," wherein the player who sheds the most pounds in the shortest time is the winner.

Follow these simple rules and maybe this year you won't notice the sarcastic tone you heard last year when he said, "This is some present."

by Bette-Jane Raphael

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