



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. The White Elephant game is played by a lot of different rule sets – some dead simple and others confusingly elaborate. Here are the rules we will use for our game:

1. Each player brings one wrapped gift to contribute to a common pool. (re-gifting is allowed)

2. You will draw a number when you place your gift on the table.

3. The first player (holding the #1) selects a gift from the table and opens it.

Make sure everyone can see the gift!

4. The following players can choose to either pick a wrapped gift from the table or steal a previous player's opened gift. Anyone who gets their gift stolen in this way can do the same – choose a new wrapped gift or steal from someone else.

To keep things moving along, there is a limit on gift swapping:

• **After two swaps, the gift is “dead” and can no longer be stolen (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 gift hasn't been stolen twice). When someone declines to steal a gift, the game comes to an end.

What Makes the Best White Elephant Gift?

There are lots of different approaches to buying a White Elephant Gift. As long as you're following the price suggestion (typically around \$10) and any “special” instructions by the organizer, you can't really go wrong. That said, 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*.