



Updated for 2003

Guide to Relationship Gift Giving

by Laura Dawn Lewis



If you are in a relationship less than a year old, this can be a pretty scary time. What gift if any do you buy? How do you know you're not being presumptuous? Or, maybe you're in Kelly's situation below where you have his family to deal with too...

Dear CC:

I am going home with my boyfriend this year to spend Christmas with his family. We have only been dating for 3 months, but by Christmas time, we will have been together for 6 months.

I was just wondering what would be appropriate gifts to get for his mother, father, and his 20-year-old sister. I feel like I should get them all something, considering they have invited me to spend the holidays with them, however, I'm not sure what would be appropriate since my boyfriend and I will not have been together for very long. How much is too much? I don't want to look like I'm trying too hard to be part of the family, but I don't want to look like I'm not trying at all. Please Help!

Kelly, Female (20)

Phoenix, AZ

Dating 3 months

Below is the answer to Kelly's question. We've also broken out the stages of a relationship into gift giving recommendations. Links are to stores or products Couples Company has in our mall that solve the problem.

SPENDING THE HOLIDAYS WITH RELATIVES OR YOUR BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND'S FAMILY

IF INVITED TO DINNER OR A PARTY:

Always ask if you can bring a dish. For the host/hostess bring wine, their favorite liquor, Christmas Ornament, candles, swags or flowers with you when you arrive or have them delivered ahead of time. Flowers can be purchased in route or sent ahead of time by a florist. It is much less expensive to purchase them and bring them with you (about 1/2). A potted poinsettia is always a good choice at this time of year.

IF INVITED OVERNIGHT/SEVERAL DAYS:

Send the hostess a gift basket of goodies (food, bath products or samplers available through Harry & David, Hallmark, 800 Flowers, AVON and Love Games) or a holiday centerpiece ahead of time or bring them with you. If you will be present Christmas

Morning, you will need to bring a gift for each person. For the parents, Christmas Ornament, (Personal Creations, Hallmark & Red Envelope have great selections), vases or other household decorations are appropriate. You can give a joint gift if the host and hostess are married. Try to avoid clothing, unless it's something representative of your culture and local.

FOR ADULT BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF YOUR DATE: Bath kits, shaving kits, cologne, costume jewelry...budget \$25 or less. TOP

Romantic Gift Giving by Relationship Stage

TOGETHER 0-3 MONTHS: KEEP IT LIGHT.

The big question here is: Are you exclusive? If you've already stated to each other that you are exclusive (both of you have said and agree to this; neither of you is dating or seeing anyone else and you see each other at least once a week and speak to each other at least 3X a week) you are in the beginning of a possible long-term relationship. This phase is called the infatuation stage and everything including each other is perfect. The bad news? 70% of you will break up before you hit six months. Because of this, don't go overboard on the holidays. You may live to regret it!

If you have not established exclusivity, you are just dating and this is not a committed relationship, even if you are sleeping together. Treat the relationship as you would any other new friendship or associate. Until exclusivity is established, this is just another friendship.

Non-Exclusive: Budget (\$30 or less Men or Women)

Exclusive: Budget (\$30 or less Women, \$50 or less Men)

EXCLUSIVE:

Appropriate gifts are anything homemade, CD's, Video's, books and clothing. Keep it under \$50 men and \$30 women. Candles, Bath & Body kits, Hobby related gifts if he/she collects or has a passion are always appropriate.

NON-EXCLUSIVE:

Keep the gift under \$30.00, nothing too romantic or too personal. Candles, Bath & Body kits, Hobby related gifts if he/she collects or has a passion are always appropriate. Our Love Games Store has great gift baskets for this stage.

The best gifts in this stage are homemade cookies, fudge or other items you've made or his favorite liquor (WOMEN). Homemade CD's (you create it for her) tickets to an event or perfume and a bottle of wine (MEN). Gift certificates are very appropriate in this stage for facials, massages or manicures.

GIVING TO WOMEN: GIRLFRIEND STORE 0-3 MONTHS

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/Girlfriend.htm>

GIVING TO MEN: BOYFRIEND STORE 0-3 MONTHS

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/boyfriend.htm>

HIS/HER CHILDREN:

If your date or new relationship has children it is appropriate and recommended to give a small gift under \$20 per child (stuffed animals and matchbox cars are always good. For teens, gift certificates to music stores). In the 0-3 month stage it is perfectly acceptable to give a card to your date and small gifts to the children.

TOGETHER 4-6 MONTHS:

Not too Serious Yet (\$80 or less Women, \$100 or less Men)

This is the toughest part of any relationship because most won't survive through six months. During this period you are beginning to see your partner's faults; you'll decide if you will become exclusive and your lives are beginning to intertwine. Keep gift giving subdued, but appropriate. No lingerie; it is too presumptuous at this stage.

GIVING TO WOMEN: GIRLFRIEND STORE 4-6 MONTHS

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/girlfriend2.htm>

Small jewelry items (earrings, costume jewelry), perfume and simple clothing items like sweaters, shirts, scarves, gloves, hobby related items and hats. Services like 1-hour massage, facials or manicure/pedicures are also great gifts. Anything you've made like drawings, wood or metalworking, poems or short stories.

GIVING TO MEN: BOYFRIEND STORE 4-6 MONTHS

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/boyfriend2.htm>

Money clips, pens, sweaters, gag gifts, tickets to events, hobby related gifts if he/she collects or has a passion (Golf or Sports) are always appropriate. Anything you've made like drawings, items sewn or knitted, poems or short stories. Car gifts are good too.

TOGETHER 7-9 MONTHS:

You're Committed! (\$175 or less Women; \$300 or less Men)

If you've made it through and past six months, you've got a good thing. This is the negotiation phase of a relationship where you learn to be a team through give and take. You'll be defining your roles as we during this time.

GIVING TO WOMEN: GIRLFRIEND STORE 7-9 MONTHS

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/girlfriend3.htm>

Give something tangible that marks your relationship's status. Lingerie is appropriate at 6 months as are more expensive gift items like fine jewelry (Under \$250), watches, trips and interesting items for the home. Guys: stay away from the kitchen appliances, cleaning items or anything matronly unless she's specifically asked for one from you. These are good gifts when you're married, but they are really disappointing to women when you are not. Anything you've made like drawings, wood or metal working, poems or short stories.

Personalized gifts are very appropriate for both he and she, especially jewelry with an engraving.

GIVING TO MEN: BOYFRIEND STORE 7-9 MONTHS

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/boyfriend3.htm>

Nice watches are our favorite gift in this stage. Dream experiences like the chance to be a race driver for an hour, a fishing trip, Pre-paid green fees, maid service for a day etc.. Clothing items like sweaters, sweatshirts and ties. Jewelry items like cufflinks, tie pins, engraved money clips, engraved pens or engraved anything are also good. Anything you've made like drawings, items sewn or knitted, poems or short stories.

10 MONTHS TO A YEAR:

(\$500 or less (Men), \$300 or less (Women); exception is engagement rings)

This is the final stage of a new relationship where you are now a team and operate as one. You have both short and long-term plans together and your gifts can and should reflect this longevity. You will most likely be spending part if not all of the holidays together.

GIVING TO WOMEN: GIRLFRIEND STORE 10-12 MONTHS

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/girlfriend4.htm>

Fine Jewelry, something very nice and unique that is made of real gold, silver or platinum with precious and/or semi precious stones. Make it something she can wear every day like a necklace, locket, watch or ring. Unique dress watches or a favorite print from an artist are also appropriate. Perfume can be given, but only as an add-on gift. The one year mark needs to be special, which is why we recommend jewelry.

CLICK HERE FOR COMPANIES THAT PERSONALIZE GIFTS:

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/Categories.htm> - Personalized%20Gifts

CLICK HERE FOR COMPANIES WITH UNIQUE GIFTS:

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/Categories.htm> - Unique%20Gifts

GIVING TO MEN: BOYFRIEND STORE 10-12 MONTHS

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/boyfriend4.htm>

Give something he can use or wear every day to remind him of you. A gold engraved money clip, a unique clock, something for his business or something that reflects his

family history (We like the Family Name History found at Personal Creations). The key is personalization. This gift needs to be personal and unique. If you think you will be proposed to within a year, hold off on the watch. Most women give a nice watch as an engagement present once he proposes. Tie clips just don't have the same pizzazz. Anything you've made like drawings, items sewn or knitted, poems or short stories is always appropriate.

THINKING OF PROPOSING THIS HOLIDAY?

<http://www.couplescompany.com/Advice/Michael/Books2.htm> - Proposals

Most experts recommend that you date a person for at least a year before proposing. The reason for this is that each of the four stages: 0-3 months (infatuation), 4-6 months (disenchantment) 6-9 months (negotiation) and 9-12 months (unity) have their own pitfalls and prizes. You need a full year to see the good, bad and quirky sides of your partner. If you are going to propose, do so on Christmas Eve, (together in private away from the family) or Christmas Evening, again together in private. Better yet, do it on the 26th. If she says no for whatever reason, you don't want Christmas to be a yearly reminder.

Why not do it in front of the family and guests? Opening an engagement ring in front of the family is a lot of pressure and can be quite embarrassing for her. She will not want to disappoint or embarrass you and may want to ask you several questions before accepting. It's also the most important decision she will ever make. Burying the event in the midst of the holiday hoopla diminishes the importance of it. Take her for a drive, go for a walk, retreat to a private room to ask. It's your moment, the two of you. Give her the opportunity to share it just with you before the rest of the family becomes involved. TOP

FINAL NOTE:

Don't forget to send Thank You Cards by Snail Mail (e-mail does not cut it!) within two weeks to:

- The Hostess if you were invited to dinner, party or to several days with the family
- To anyone whom gave you a gift, gift certificate or money.

For a Full listing of Stores and a description of their product offerings, click here <http://www.couplescompany.com/Shopping/Categories.htm>

**HAPPY HANUKKAH,
MERRY CHRISTMAS
& TO ALL HUMANITY A
PROSPEROUS, PEACEFUL NEW YEAR!**

