

To Give or not To Give



When you visit customers, suppliers or coworkers in other countries, you may want to give a small gift to thank the other people for looking after you. However, it's important to be aware of different gift-giving customs around the world so that you do not accidentally give the wrong gift.

First of all, check that gift giving is appropriate for employees of the company you are working with. Most companies do not allow employees to receive expensive gifts and some companies do not allow their employees to receive gifts at all.

If gift giving is allowed, be careful about what gift you give. For example, in China, giving a clock or a watch as a present suggests death will come to the receiver soon. Similarly, giving a comb in Japan is considered bad luck as the Japanese word for comb is "kushi," means suffering and death. In Sweden, you should never give soap as a present, as people believe that it may wash your friendship away.

Numbers are also important when giving gifts. In Europe, North America and some other countries, the number 13 is considered extremely unlucky for religious reasons.

Does this mean you should avoid giving gifts? No, but you should always research a country's gift-giving customs before you buy anything.

1. What is considered a good gift in Japan?
2. What is considered a bad gift in Japan? Why?
3. When do you give gifts?
4. Do Japanese consider any numbers to be unlucky?