

# REGIFTING

## Some presents keep on being given

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A couple of years ago, Pat Marks got a set of earrings as a Christmas gift from her mother and stepfather. She was told they were from the Louvre, the famous museum in Paris.

Except they weren't and Mrs. Marks knew it.

See, she'd given those very earrings — purchased at a local Toledo store — to her mother on a previous Christmas.

"Now it is kind of an inside joke in my family," the Sylvania woman said. "When someone asks us where we got a present, we tell them we got it from the Louvre."

Many people talk about the gift that keeps on giving, but these days you might just as likely get the gift that keeps on being given.



It's called regifting — giving someone a gift that someone else gave to you — and it continues to gain acceptance. A survey conducted by Harris Interactive found that more than 50 percent of consumers admit to regifting and they plan to regift in the future.

Most said they did it because they thought the item was perfect for the new recipient; 9 percent said they were just lazy, and 4 percent admitted they were motivated by dislike for the recipient.

The word itself dates back to ancient times — the mid-'90s. That's when the *Seinfeld* episode "The Label Maker" is credited with coining the term in 1995.

Since then, the popularity of regifting appears to have climbed, despite the belief among some that it can be tacky.

"More and more people are starting to regift and feel confident and comfortable about it," said Tanisha Warner, a spokesman for Regiftable.com. "You have eBay, which basically is just a big regifting site."

Regiftable.com was created by Money Management International, a credit counseling agency based in Houston. The idea was to call attention to the subject of holiday budgeting.

"Resourceful regifting helps [people] pare down their spending," Ms. Warner said. "It's another option to buying holiday gifts."

That's not to say it's been embraced by those who mind manners for a living, like Jill Marie Zachman. Her business is First Impressions Etiquette Training in Waterville, and she said regifting is still a no-no.

"It's so hard because one part of you says to yourself: No one would know," Ms. Zachman said. "But etiquette says you should never do it."

If anything goes wrong — say, the original giver notices the gift they gave you in someone else's house — it can be embarrassing and hurtful, she said.

The Emily Post Institute, that mecca of good manners in Vermont, says regifting may be done only rarely and

under specific conditions.

It is acceptable, according to the institute's Web site, [www.emilypost.com](http://www.emilypost.com), when you are certain the gift is something the recipient would enjoy and it is brand new and comes with its original box and instructions. The gift must not be homemade or something that the original giver took great care to select.

That said, many still will use it as a means to get rid of that kitschy statue they got for their wedding or the 14 boxes of chocolates they got for the holidays.

Barbara Bitela keeps a regifting closet for all the gifts she plans to pass on, things like bottles of white wine, scarves, and jewelry that she doesn't need.

The California woman is the author of *The Art of Regifting* (Outskirts Press, \$10.95), which provides a number of tips to help potential regifters.

The cardinal rule, she said, is this: "Be sure the person you're about to regift to isn't the very same person you got the gift from."

It seems obvious, but it's worth a reminder.

One Toledo man, who requested anonymity, said he has an acquaintance who is notorious for regifting. He told of a time when this person gave another friend a stained, dog-eared book as a Christmas gift — regifting the very book the friend had given that person earlier in the year for a birthday. What's more, there was still the original personalized note offering birthday wishes on the title page.

"Regifting a present to the person you originally received it from, with that person's handwritten inscription still on it, has to be worth of the regifting hall of fame," he said.

To those who find themselves stuck with nonreturnable gifts they don't want or need, there are alternatives to turning around and giving them to another friend or relative.

Art St. John, a West Toledo resident who admits he's regifted items, suggests regifting to charity to avoid any criticisms.

"The major drawback to regifting is that people will think you are either insensitive or cheap — or both," he said. "In order to avoid unwarranted criticism from family and/or friends, the best way to regift is to 'gift' the unwanted item to a great organization like Goodwill or Volunteers of America."

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