Business etiquette is an integral aspect of professional life, requiring both knowledge and tact. During the holidays, people can be even less certain of “what to do” or what not to do. Here we’ve compiled a few basics to get you through the holiday season with confidence and grace:

Should I give my boss a holiday gift?

Generally, no. It could easily be perceived as trying to win favor. However, a pooled gift from you and other employees that isn't too expensive or personal is fine.

Should I give gifts to my direct reports?

It's your call. It's certainly a nice gesture and a great way to acknowledge those who work for you. If you do decide to give gifts, give across the board: for example, don't give to only one department head, but not the other two. Good gift ideas include gift certificates, tickets to the theater or a sporting event, books, CDs and food items.

What about co-workers?

The Secret Santa system or a holiday grab bag are two of the easier ways to handle this. These types of gift exchanges can keep costs down and can be a lot of fun. Humorous gifts are OK—but don't go overboard. Homemade gifts are also a good idea. If your workplace doesn't go in for the overall exchange plan, it's okay to give gifts to your closest office buddies. Just be discreet about doing so in order not to hurt others' feelings. Sometimes, exchanging gifts with a few is better done outside of work.

I just got laid off. Can I cut back my gift giving at the last minute?

Yes. Let people know (ahead of time if possible) that you won't be purchasing gifts this year. For those you still want to recognize, get creative with an inexpensive but meaningful gesture. You could plan to spend an afternoon in the park or build snowmen with your nieces and nephews instead of buying them the hot new toy. Send your parents, siblings, and close friends letters of appreciation for their special roles in your life. A homemade meal or batch of cookies is always a welcome gift—and a little easier on the pocketbook

For more information on Emily Post Business Etiquette Programs contact Director of Sales and Relationships, Dawn Stanyon at Dawn@emilypost.com.