

The holiday season is a budget stretching season for many. Between your gift list, holiday tips, parties, dinners out and traveling, it's easy for expenses to quickly add up. One question we've often been asked is: What's the difference between a tip and a gift?

It can easily get confusing and it's important to make a distinction about whether you're giving someone a gift or a tip. Why? Professionals shouldn't be tipped--and doing so could be perceived as inappropriate. For example, a cash tip to your child's teacher or a government employee such as a postal worker is (in most cases) a prohibited practice. Gifts of small monetary value, however, are fine.

Tipping is an end-of-year cash gratuity to a service provider such as your doorman, hairdresser, newspaper delivery person, babysitter, or dog groomer, to thank them for their consistent and outstanding service.

Why does this get so confusing? One reason may be that you can give a gift instead of or in addition to a tip, a helpful tactic if you're strapped for cash. For more on this topic, [check out our tipping chart](#), complete with monetary recommendations.

Gift-giving: A thoughtful present to recognize and show appreciation for family, friends, co-workers and other people in our lives.

We've received many questions about whether to tip or give a gift to teachers and health care professionals. These professionals fall into the gift category. Here's why:

Teachers

It's wonderful for a child to want to give a gift to his or her teacher. It's also lovely for a parent to recognize a teacher's hard work. Books, gift certificates to office supply stores, or other thoughtful items are welcome. Teachers are salaried professionals--a cash tip is not appropriate as it could be seen as "currying favor." Use this opportunity to teach your child the basics of

gift-giving etiquette, such as how to select a gift that someone would like and how to present it to the person.

Nurses or Health Care Professionals

Cash gifts may be prohibited. Check with each institution's policy before giving a gift to a medical professional. At some non-profit institutions, a donation may be made in honor of a nurse or other employee. Health care professionals have told us they do welcome gifts such as platters of food or cookies that can be shared with staff. Gift cards, if allowed, are a great option too. Good choices include gift cards for the hospital coffee shop or area restaurants. If you select a gift for an individual, choose one that is meaningful to you and always accompany it with a handwritten note of thanks.

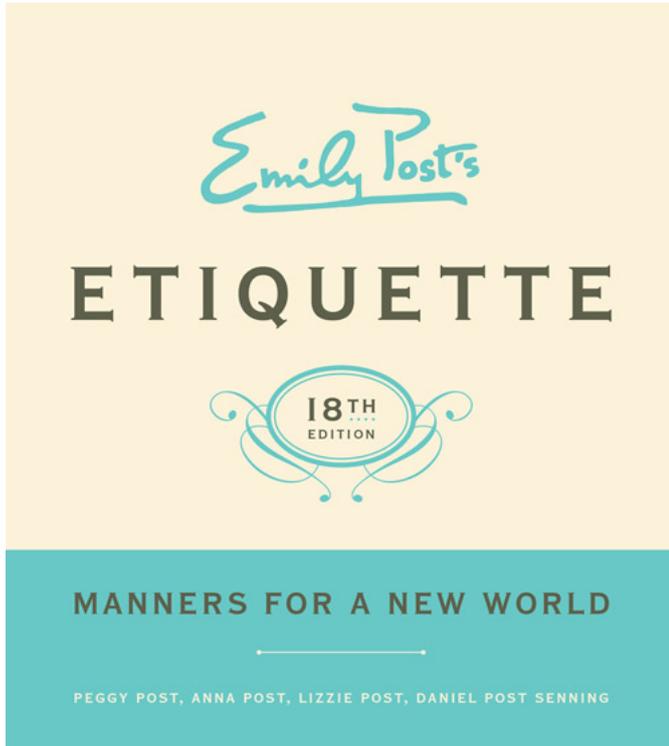
Remember: Gifts and tips at the holidays are optional (unless part of a written contract) and the kind of gift is dependant on your budget and relationship to the provider. Holiday tips don't replace consistent kindness and expressed gratitude throughout the year.

Read more about this topic:

- [General Tipping Guidelines](#)
- [Finer Points of Tipping](#)
- [End of Summer Tipping Guide](#)
- [Holiday Tipping Is Really Holiday Thanking](#)

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You may also be interested in:



For more information on tipping, we recommend [Emily Post's Etiquette , 18th edition](#) , by Peggy Post, Anna Post, Lizzie Post, and Daniel Post Senning. View our full line of etiquette books in our [bookstore](#)