Rule number one when you're opening a gift in the presence of the giver: thank the person enthusiastically. Even if the present is the last thing you wanted, thank the giver for his thoughtfulness, drawing on the actor in you to mask your disappointment. Be pleasant but noncommittal: "It's nice of you to think of me in this way!" or "What an imaginative choice!" That being said, there are instances in which you may want to regift or exchange a gift.

The word "regifting" (meaning passing a gift you've received along to someone else) has recently made its way into the language but is this an indication that something that was once unacceptable is now standard practice?

Not really. It's a symptom of the surplus of "stuff" many people find themselves with, and their desire to be practical and give away things they know they will never use. Still, gifts should be recycled only rarely, and only when the following criteria are met:

- You're certain that the gift is something the recipient would really like to receive.
- The gift is brand new (no cast-offs allowed) and comes with its original box and instructions.
- The gift isn't one that the original giver took great care to select or make.

Simply put, you have to *make sure you don't hurt feelings* - neither the original giver's nor the recipient's. Would the person who gave you the gift mind that you passed it along? Do he and the recipient of your gift know each other, and would it be awkward if they realized that you've recycled a gift from one to the other? Following are two scenarios where recycling a gift would be appropriate:

1. Your sister's coffeemaker just stopped working, and her birthday is days away. You, who are on a budget, have been given a coffemaker that's a duplicate of the one you already have. Your sister has always liked yours. Instead of stashing the extra coffeemaker in your closet, you

wrap it in its original box and present it to her. She's delighted.

2. You've been given two copies of the same book. Your best friend, with whom you exchange Christmas gifts each year, is a fan of the author. You decide to give her the book - not as a holiday gift, but as a surprise: "Edith, I received two copies of this book and want you to have one." An "unofficial" gift of this sort is not wrapped.

Only you can decide whether to pass along a gift, and if so how to do it appropriately. Think through each situation carefully and then, if in doubt, don't do it.