



# ONTARIO TECH

## GUIDELINE FOR GIFT EXCHANGE

Gift-giving at a workplace can be a great way to show appreciation and build relationships, but it can also be tricky if not handled with care. This guideline can help keep things stress-free and positive for everyone to keep in mind.

### General Guidelines

#### Aim for Inclusion

- Ensure that everyone who wants to participate has the opportunity.
- Be thoughtful about choosing gifts that won't make anyone feel excluded or uncomfortable.
- Allow participants to disclose any **personal restrictions** (such as allergies or dietary preferences) to avoid unintentionally offending or inconveniencing anyone.
- **Avoid** giving gifts to only a select group of co-workers, as this can create feelings of exclusion
  - This should be done privately and outside the office setting.

#### Respect Boundaries

- **Don't** pressure employees to participate; gift exchanges should be voluntary not mandatory.
- Make sure everyone feels comfortable opting out.
- Stick to any established spending limits for gifts.

#### Power Dynamics

- Be mindful of potential power dynamics.
  - Ensure the exchange doesn't create feelings of pressure or discomfort.
  - Employees should not typically give gifts to their managers to prevent any appearance of favoritism or undue influence.
- **Avoid** giving gifts around review periods.
  - Presenting a gift to your manager right before a performance review might be perceived as an attempt to influence their evaluation.
- **Instead:** consider a gift to the whole team for special occasions.

### Professionalism and Appropriateness

#### Keep it Professional

- Ensure your gifts are appropriate for the workplace.
- **Avoid the following types of gifts:**
  - Personal items, such as perfume, clothing, or jewelry.
  - Humorous or controversial gifts, including political, religious, or overly personal items.
  - Alcohol or any consumables that may not be suitable for all employees.
  - Adult-themed gifts that may cause discomfort or be considered inappropriate.





- **Instead:**

- Opt for neutral, thoughtful gifts like books, gift cards, etc. to keep things professional and respectful.
- Offer alternatives to traditional gifts, such as handmade items.

If you have any inquiries regarding this document, please contact the Office of Risk Management at [orm@ontariotechu.ca](mailto:orm@ontariotechu.ca).

