

Official White Elephant Gift Exchange Rules



1. Each player brings one wrapped gift to contribute to a common pool

The gift exchange organizer should provide information on what type of gift people should bring.

2. Players draw numbers to determine what order they will go in

Alternatively, someone can draw names from a hat, or the order can be set by the organizer prior to the event.

3. Players sit in a circle or line where they can see the gift pile

To make things easier, everyone should sit in the order in which they will take their turns.

4. The first player selects a gift from the pool and opens it

Make sure everyone can see the gift!

5. The following players can choose to either pick an unwrapped gift from the pool or steal a previous player's gift. Anyone who gets their gift stolen in this way can do the same – choose a new gift or steal from someone else.

6. After all players have had a turn, the first player gets a chance to swap the gift he or she is holding for any other opened gift. Anyone whose gift is stolen may steal from someone else (as long as that person hasn't been stolen from yet). When someone declines to steal a gift, the game comes to an end.

To keep things moving along, there are a couple of limits on gift swapping:

- A present can only be stolen once per turn, which means players who have a gift stolen from them have to wait to get it back.
- After three swaps, the turn automatically comes to an end (otherwise things could drag on for a *long* time).
- See "Popular Variations" below for other possible twists.

Note that for this last "extra" turn, the three-swap rule doesn't apply. Players can keep swapping until someone decides to stand pat, or there are no other eligible people to steal from.