

## Gifts for BRICs:

### Gift Giving in the BRIC Nations (Brazil, Russia, India, & China)

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Giving a gift to a customer or team member from a different country this holiday season? Gift-giving traditions and taboos vary greatly between cultures. Here's a quick reference guide to help you avoid giving a gift that's misunderstood, or even worse – offensive.

These 60-second summaries provide basic pointers on gift-giving in the BRIC nations - Brazil, Russia, India, and China. We focus on the BRIC nations for two reasons: prevalence and diversity. A 2003 Goldman Sachs Investment Bank paper proposed the BRIC economies will eclipse most of today's richest countries by 2050. These cultures also show how significantly gift-giving traditions can vary from US practices.

#### Brazil

Good Gifts	Avoid These Gifts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Calculators</li><li>Electronic address books</li><li>Pocket CD players</li><li>Tapes &amp; CDs of hot US entertainers</li><li>Inexpensive cameras</li><li>Name-brand pens</li></ul>	Items that symbolize grief: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Knives</li><li>Handkerchiefs</li></ul>
Color Caution	
Avoid colors that symbolize grief: Black, Purple	
Presentation Pointers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Give gifts in a relaxed social setting instead of at a formal meeting.</li><li>For an initial meeting, buy lunch/dinner instead of giving a gift.</li></ul>	

#### Russia

Good Gifts	Avoid These Gifts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Baseball caps</li><li>Tapes of rock or country music.</li><li>Ballpoint pens</li><li>Picture &amp; art books</li><li>Perfume &amp; good soaps</li><li>American cigarettes &amp; lighters</li><li>Solar-powered calculators</li><li>Well-made business card holders</li><li>Cameras</li><li>Watches</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>An even number of flowers (superstition says it will cause a funeral). An odd number of flowers is appropriate.</li></ul> Sharp objects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Knives</li><li>Scissors</li></ul>
Color Caution	
Use red with caution. It symbolizes Bolsheviks and Communism.	
Presentation Pointers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Do not give a gift across the threshold of a house. Wait until you are inside.</li><li>Never go to a home without bringing a gift: typically liquor or dessert.</li><li>Birthday gifts are given on or after the actual day, but not before.</li><li>Do not buy or give a baby gift before the baby is born.</li></ul>	

## India

Good Gifts	Avoid These Gifts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Imported whiskey (if your recipient consumes alcohol)</li> </ul> <p>If invited for dinner bring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chocolate</li> <li>Flowers</li> </ul>	<p>Items that symbolize funerals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frangipani flowers</li> </ul> <p>Items related to dogs (Muslims consider them to be unclean):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toy dogs</li> <li>Pictures of dogs</li> </ul> <p>Items related to cows (for Hindus):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beef</li> <li>Any leather products</li> </ul>
Color Caution	
<p>Avoid unlucky colors for gift wrap: Black, White.            Instead try: Green, Red (lucky), Yellow (lucky).</p>	
Presentation Pointers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gifts are not opened in the presence of the giver.</li> <li>If you give money, give an uneven number (\$11 instead of \$10).</li> </ul>	

## China

Good Gifts	Avoid These Gifts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banquets (you'll likely receive one and should reciprocate)</li> <li>High-quality pens</li> <li>Kitchen gadgets</li> <li>Expensive liquors like cognac.</li> <li>Stamps for stamp collecting</li> <li>Hair accessories for women</li> <li>Cigarette lighters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food at a dinner party (implies the host cannot provide for guest)</li> </ul> <p>Items that symbolize funerals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Straw sandals</li> <li>Clocks</li> <li>Stork or crane</li> <li>Handkerchiefs</li> </ul>
Color Caution	
<p>Avoid colors in gifts or wrapping paper that symbolize grief: White, Black, Blue</p> <p>Instead try: Red (lucky), Pink (happy &amp; prosperous), Yellow (happy &amp; prosperous)</p>	
Presentation Pointers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use both hands when presenting the gift.</li> <li>Gift giving is technically against the law in China. The recipient will likely decline 3 times before accepting. Keep asking. Once (s)he accepts, express gratitude for the acceptance.</li> <li>Don't give anything of value in front of others. It causes embarrassment and trouble.</li> <li>Gifts should be given by the senior delegate in your group to the senior delegate in the Chinese group. Emphasis should be on company-to-company gift-giving.</li> <li>If negotiating a deal, do not give gifts until after the negotiation is finished.</li> </ul>	

### Giving Gifts in the U.S.

Just as Americans seek advice on gift-giving in other countries, people from other cultures seek the same advice about the U.S. Here are some pointers that people from other cultures may hear about gift-giving in the USA.

## United States

Good Gifts	Avoid These Gifts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Items from the country of the gift-giver (wine from France, tea from China, chocolate from Switzerland)</li> </ul> <p>Popular business gifts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food items, especially dessert or snack foods</li> <li>Items for use in an office, such as pens, portfolios, desktop clocks</li> <li>Apparel, especially if imprinted with the name of the gift-giver's company</li> </ul> <p>If invited for dinner bring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flowers</li> <li>Plant</li> <li>Bottle of wine</li> </ul>	<p>Alcohol or meat products, unless you know the recipient consumes these items.</p> <p>Items that can be construed as too intimate when given to a member of the opposite sex. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perfume for women in business situations</li> <li>Clothing that is too personal for women in business situations</li> </ul>
Color Caution	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black or metallic gift-wrap typically connotes formality.</li> <li>White gift-wrap is typically reserved for wedding gifts.</li> <li>Pink gift-wrap is used for the birth of a girl. Blue gift-wrap is used for the birth of a boy.</li> </ul>	
Presentation Pointers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gifts are opened as soon as they are received and shown to all who are present.</li> <li>Many gifts are wrapped with a note card or gift-tag attached.</li> <li>Some corporations discourage or disallow business gift-giving. In those situations, a gracious handwritten note is appropriate.</li> <li>U.S. tax law sets a limit on the amount of expenses that can be deducted for business gifts.</li> </ul>	

### More Than the Thought Counts!

The old adage of "It's the thought that counts" is no longer valid in today's world. To ensure your gift delivers the sentiment you intend, a little research is necessary to honor cultural expectations. The result is a gift that will portray your thoughtfulness, good taste, and cultural awareness.

Sources: wikipedia.org, Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands by Terri Morrison, about.com, cyborlink.com, culturalsavvy.com, americanexpress.com



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