

A WORD ABOUT ETHICS

HOLIDAY PARTIES AND GIFTS

INVITATIONS AND GIFTS

May Federal employees accept invitations to holiday parties?

○ Yes, but only if an invitation is:
(1) based on a personal relationship,
(2) \$20 or less in value, or (3) to an event attended by a large number and broad range of persons and the employee's supervisor approves attendance as benefitting the agency and as not creating an adverse public reaction. Supervisors should sign a form, available at the website below, to record this approval. Approval generally is not appropriate for an event that is primarily entertainment.

Are there limits on holiday gifts Federal employees may accept?

○ Yes; holiday gifts are no different than gifts offered at other times. They may not be accepted if given because of the employee's Government position or from someone with interests before the Department, unless an exception applies. Common exceptions are: (1) gifts based on a personal relationship and (2) gifts worth \$20 or less (but no more than \$50 in gifts from the same source each year).

GIFTS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES

May co-workers exchange gifts?

○ Yes, if all persons are participating voluntarily. Employees may participate in mutual gift exchanges, but the value should be limited to no more than \$10 if subordinates will be exchanging gifts with supervisors. A gift to a supervisor may be no more than \$10. Note that the value of the gift, and not each employee's contribution, must not exceed \$10.

May contract workers participate in office parties and gift exchanges?

○ Yes. They may not be solicited for a party contribution, but may voluntarily pay for their *per person* costs. Federal employees may give gifts to contract workers, but may accept only gifts totaling \$20 or less from all workers of the same contractor.

May employees collect money for an office holiday party?

○ Yes, but participation must be voluntary—no one may be coerced. Those attending may be required to pay a reasonable set amount for the per person costs. Supervisors should not request funds and may not require participation.

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