

are staying.” And it’s not necessary for the newlyweds to pick up the breakfast tab, she adds, though if you can manage it without going into debt, great.

As for whether or not you should dig into your pile o’ loot in front of everyone, avoid it if possible. “If the gifts are there at your parents’ house, for instance, I would hide them in another room. You don’t have to open them in front of everyone—that’s not a lot of fun for the couple; it can be awkward.” If Hanslip had her way, gifts wouldn’t be present at all: “In the past, couples received gifts beforehand and opened them in private as they arrived. From a traditional etiquette perspective, people shouldn’t be bringing gifts to the wedding. It puts undue stress on the couple, who have to make sure the gifts get home. Guests should mail the gift to the couple ahead of time. Technically, you have one year from the wedding date to give the gift—so the day-of isn’t optimal.”

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## *How did you ever know we love tchotchkes?* (Dear God, let there be a gift receipt)

You had the good taste to select a dozen 16-piece Royal Copenhagen hand-painted porcelain place settings. If only your relatives had done their part by sticking to the gift registry. Instead, what you got were three side plates, a set of Royal Doulton “Captain Ahab” character jugs and a \$50 gift certificate for Hot Tub Emporium. Not exactly the jackpot o’ household items you were hoping to score.

Presumably, “new stuff” isn’t the (only) reason you’re getting married, but, even if you spread the word that you want cash or no gifts at all (a travesty of etiquette according to Miss Manners) you’re bound to wind up with a few items you don’t need or just plain don’t like. Question is: Would it be wrong to exchange or return this stuff? Should you tell the giver? And if you decide to hang on to the ceramic lovebirds from Aunt Eunice, do you have to display them when she comes over?

Professional organizer Shannon Grams answers, in order, no, no and maybe. “Most of our homes are already cluttered with things we don’t really need, and a deluge of wedding gifts can be overwhelming,” she says. “What we need to keep in mind is that nobody says you have to love every item and keep it forever—no gift comes with a guilt card attached.” If it came with a receipt, however, feel free to return it, cash it in or exchange it for something you’ll use. And there’s no need to let the sender know unless, of course, it’s a close friend or relative who might be hurt, in which case, says Grams, you should probably hang onto it. “If you keep something for sentimental reasons, just store it. If you want to be able to whip it out when Nana comes over, put it in a Rubbermaid bin labelled ‘Special Keepsakes.’”

Shannon Grams is the owner/chief organizer of A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING, 998-8439, [www.aplaceforeverything.com](http://www.aplaceforeverything.com). She charges \$40 per hour for her services.

“ Strike an average between what a woman thinks of her husband a month before she marries him and what she thinks of him a year afterward, and you will have the truth about him. ”

