

Yankee Swap Official Rules and variations from YankeeSwap.com

The most popular version of the Yankee Swap Rules or White Elephant Gift Exchange Rules say any number of people may participate, including children. However, the minimum number of participants should be at least six or else the game is not much fun. Each participant is asked to bring along a gift worth no more than a pre-agreed amount, generally around \$25. Each player picks a number from a hat from one up to the total number of participants. Each person gets a crack at picking a gift according to his or her number. The person who picks the first gift opens it to show it to the rest of the company. Then the number two participant picks a gift and chooses to either unwrap it or swap it for an unwrapped gift. If the gift is swapped, the person who had their gift taken from them gets to unwrap the new gift. The game goes on until everyone has had their chance. A common twist to the game is to then allow the number one swapper to choose a gift from any of the unwrapped gifts.

When everyone has opened a gift some trading should be expected. Trading is perfectly acceptable so that, as much as possible, everyone goes home with a gift they are happy with.

There are many variations of the traditional Yankee Swap.

Here's another twist on the traditional Yankee Swap, after the last person's turn, the first person has the option of keeping their current gift (in which case the game ends), or they can exchange with anyone else. If they choose to exchange, the person they stole from now has the option of either keeping the gift they were given, or exchanging. This game only ends when someone decides to keep their gift.

A trading limit may be set so that a gift may only be swapped a certain number of times. For another version of The Yankee Swap, instead of numbers from a hat you need two decks of cards. Each deck is shuffled individually and one of them is dealt to the players. One person flips the top card of the remaining deck, whoever has the matching card then takes a gift. The next card is flipped and that person takes a gift or takes someone else's gift. This continues until everyone has had a chance.

Another variation states that the gifts must not be purchased, but rather are items that one finds lying around the house or the garage, things that are valuable but for which you have found no use.

Do's

Play the game with a sense of humor.

Don'ts

Do not take the outcome too seriously. Do not bring gifts that are absolute junk and unlikely to be useful to anyone. Remember, The Yankee Swap is about all about giving.

Yankee Swap Gift Ideas and Tips

The gift you bring should be something you would be happy to receive. Your gift doesn't necessarily have to appeal to the entire group, however, it should be appropriate for more than a few people or at least something that can be regifted, otherwise someone might get stuck with something they have absolutely no use for. Try not to bring something that is too gender specific, for example, don't bring a gift certificate to that chic designer hand bag store unless you are sure nobody would mind getting it.