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REGISTER RIGHT

12 TIPS FOR GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

When it comes right down to it, registering for your wedding gifts is, essentially, shopping with other people's money. Which is why it is so important that you create your registry with consideration and graciousness—along with plenty of items you'll use every day, some you'll save for special occasions, and a few that will be cherished for generations to come. So, how do you create a well-

rounded registry that covers all your bases? Turn to these insider tips to assemble a registry that meets your needs today, and accessorizes your future together.

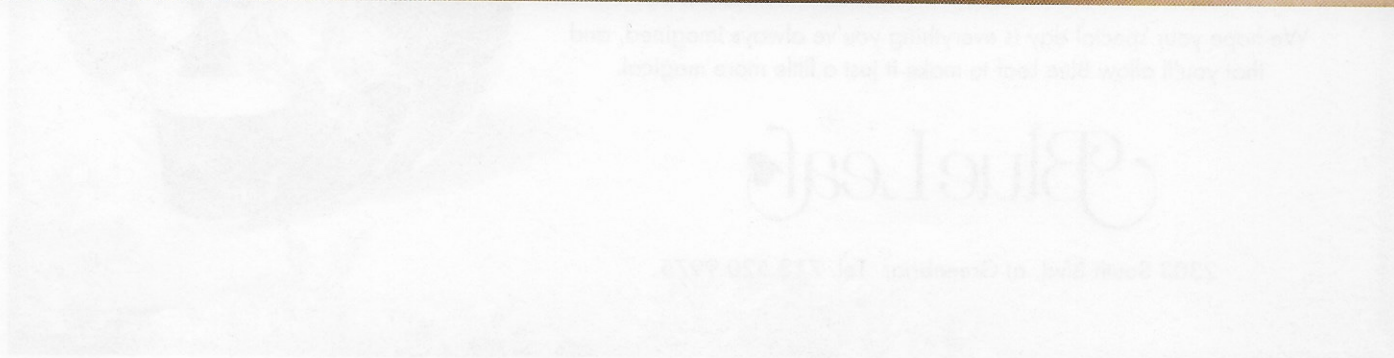
1. TAKE INVENTORY

Before starting to build your registry, take stock of your stuff. You are combining two lives, after all, and if you are not living together already,

WRITER JULIE LEMEROND | PHOTO D. JONES PHOTOGRAPHY



STYLING & DECOR: TODD EVENTS



there may be overlap in some of the things each of you already owns.

Michelle Bolivar of Rice Village gift boutique Blue Leaf Houston—a gem of a store with a well-curated selection of fine products—advises, “Take inventory of which kitchen, bedroom and bathroom items you already have between the two of you, so you know what you absolutely need and what you already own.”

2. REGISTER TOGETHER

It’s easy for one spouse-to-be to take the reins with registry details, but don’t forget that you are shopping for the two of you, together, as a couple.

Julie Shuford of iconic Houston hardware-and-gifts retailer Bering’s, offers this helpful advice: “Going into the wedding registry process with a ‘we do’ mentality rather than ‘I do,’ and keeping in mind the

idea of registering for the future that you two will be sharing, will make the experience much more fun and meaningful.”

3. THINK AHEAD

The registry team at Upper Kirby design-and-lifestyle emporium Kuhl-Linscomb is used to working with couples to create their dream registries, and they recommend thinking not just about what your life looks like now, but what it might look like 10 years from now. “Remember, families grow!” they say. “Someday you’ll want to host Thanksgiving and other family celebrations; you’ll be happy you have enough china, crystal and silver.”

4. BIGGER IS BETTER

Giving your guests a wide range of gift options at different prices is crucial to building a solid and gracious registry. “Guests do

not buy things that they do not like themselves,” says the Kuhl-Linscomb team.

Building a bigger registry than you expect to fulfill is key, as well. After your bridal showers and other pre-wedding events, but before the big day, your wedding registry can become sparse. Having plenty of gift choices “will ensure that there are still special, unique pieces available to purchase from your registry” before and after the big day, they add.

5. GO FOR THE GOOD STUFF

“Think about the things that you will need in the future that you’ll appreciate having, but that you don’t want to break the bank buying yourself,” Bolivar advises. “For example, if you really need a nice set of glasses for both red and white wine, for entertaining, but don’t want to spend your income on it because you’d rather save up for a new

Married life
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refrigerator or mattress (which obviously are not practical wedding gifts), make sure you pick out glasses you'd love to get."

6. TAKE A FEW CHANCES

"Over the last year, coolers and grills have become regular registry items," Shuford says. These days, Bering's sees "Big Green Egg Grills and YETI Coolers on the majority of wedding registries."

Whimsy is big at Blue Leaf, too. "Color is back!" Bolivar notes. "Whether it's your china pattern, your bedroom linen set or your KitchenAid mixer, couples are leaving monochromatic styles behind and jumping into color, which is so much fun."

7. GET ORGANIZED

With so many gifts, givers and registry retailers to keep track of, it is vital to document your registry.

Shuford recommends: "Keep an Excel spreadsheet of gifts you and your future spouse have received, along with thank-you cards that you have or have not written. Maintaining an organized list of gifts also helps you determine exactly what you still need to close out your registry."

8. COMBINE OLD AND NEW

Those treasured heirloom china pieces that you may have inherited still have a place in your collection. Mixing and matching is a perfectly acceptable way to honor the past while shaping your future.

"Brides and grooms are mixing and matching fine china more than ever," the Kuhl-Linscomb team notes. "Style is always evolving, and it's fun to update family heirlooms by mixing in new and interesting pieces. Mixing brands, patterns and colors helps couples to express their own style while using special family pieces."

9. DON'T GET STUCK ON DINING

"Don't assume that the dining table and kitchen are the only rooms to register for,"

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Bolivar says. "Your bedroom has amazing potential for beautiful gifts, and guests love to buy the couple bedroom gifts!"

Other non-kitchen registry items may include decorative pillows, luxurious throws, monogrammed towels, ornate picture frames, vases, candle-holders and more.

10. CHOOSE WITH LOVE

You aren't settling for anything but the best when choosing your life partner, so look at your registry the same way too: Only register for items that you are drawn to and absolutely love. Otherwise you will end up with a household full of items that don't reflect the love you have for each other.

"Make sure you pick a place setting that you both absolutely love!" Bolivar says. "A place setting can either be a treasure that you love and cherish for years, or it can just be something you eat on. It's entirely up to you."

11. USE WHAT YOU RECEIVE

When building your registry, remember that most of your tabletop items aren't meant to be stored away or used for display only, like museum pieces.

"It is no longer about using formal settings on holidays only, but instead pulling pieces out for hosting a wine night or a small mixer with friends. Fine china can be fun and is surprisingly functional," Shuford says.

12. HAVE FUN

Creating your registry should be an occasion for fun, not a source of stress. "Go with the flow, and remember that this step in your life is a fun adventure," the Kuhl-Linscomb team says. "Registering for your wedding is all about you and your spouse-to-be for the rest of your life—and that is something special and magical. It's not about what your mother wants, or your grandmother or your best friend. It's your special time, so do what you want."

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