



# DO I HAVE TO KEEP IT?

Q. Kerryn, a friend gave me a beautiful gift, but it's just not me. Do I have to keep it?

Short answer: No.

Longer answer: No. You don't have to keep anything. No matter how close your relationship or how expensive the gift. You also don't have to keep a gift for a certain arbitrary period before giving yourself permission to donate it, re-gift it, or recycle it.

It's helpful to remember why you received the gift. Your friend saw an item, thought you might like it, and wanted to let you know she thought of you, and that you are special and important to her. Or a special occasion like a birthday, promotion, anniversary or some other celebration was coming up and she went looking for something she hoped you would like. Once again to let you know you were thought of and it was an occasion she wanted to mark with a gift.

In all these situations the real gift is her thoughtfulness not the token itself.

Unlikely in that thought process is your friend thinking: I hope if she doesn't like it she keeps it for ages and feels guilty about it and decides to take time looking after it, storing it and managing it. I hope she feels obliged to keep it forever in case she hurts my feelings.

Does it seem absurd when I put it that way? I hope so. I hope your friends are giving true gifts. Not obligations and expectations wrapped in a bow. That's the wrong kind of strings attached.

The only obligation you have is to say thank you. The gift exchange is over at that point. What you do with the gift isn't really any of your friend's business. You don't owe her any explanation. You aren't responsible for managing her feelings anymore than she is responsible for managing your boundaries about what comes, stays or leaves your home. You only need offer kindness.

Depending on how honest you want to be, you have a few options. You can say something like:

- Thank you and keep it
- Thank you and decide to re-gift, or pass on to someone you know would like it, or donate it.
- Thanks so much, it's not really me/it doesn't suit my lifestyle/I'm struggling with overwhelm/it's not my love language, and ask if she would like to keep it.

Option 1 means you are acknowledging your friend's kindness and keeping an item that you don't want at the expense of yourself, your integrity, your time, your home. Is her potential disappointment worth those sacrifices? If you knew she wouldn't care either way, would you make the same choice?

It's worth noticing if you have a pattern of de-prioritising your needs in your friendships and in your home. This could be a sign that you have some unhelpful thought patterns and may benefit from some coaching to help re-prioritise your own wants and needs.

Option 2 means you are acknowledging your friend's kindness, prioritising what you want in your home, being clear about how much you want to manage in your home, and giving someone else the opportunity to really enjoy the item.

Option 3 means you are acknowledging your friend's kindness, and holding space for increased honesty and understanding in your friendship. Your friend may love the item and be happy to keep it, if not she can regift or donate it. Or you can do that.

"But Kerryn what do I do if I quietly donate it and then she asks me about it?"

You can say something kind and truthful that acknowledges your friend's generous spirit like: thanks again it felt really special to know you thought about me, I loved that you did that. I no longer have it. I donated it and now it's living it's best life in a new home.

Going forward you can start to normalise giving explicit permission to your friend's and family to re-gift or donate gifts from you if they don't hit the mark. My friends and I do that and it's been a relief all round. Also make sure you know each other's love language and use that as a guide.

Remember a kind gift giver does not want to create a burden in your life.

You can let the gift go.

