



Easy festive season fixes

Nothing to wear to the office party? Forgot about buying someone a gift? Dreading the festive-season squeeze on your purse? Don't panic! Here, expert tips to smooth over any dilemma – keep calm and read this.

Your office-party dilemmas, sorted

Courtenay Carey, CEO of Joburg's The School of Etiquette, and Chata Romano, image consultant and founder of chataromano.com, give their tips on how to handle awkward moments.

"Help! A co-worker is making drunken advances. How can I politely draw the line?"

"The goal is to shut down the situation without hurting any feelings," Courtenay explains. "Be polite but firm and clear, saying, 'I'm flattered, but I'm not looking for anything more than friendship.'"

"When it comes to communication, 55% is body language, 38% is tone and only 7% of it is words, so keep your tone definite, but gentle. Smile at him, with uncrossed arms – don't turn your back on him as this can feel quite confrontational.

"If he's still pushy, make an excuse to visit the toilet or get a drink. Integrate into a group on your return; he's unlikely to keep pressing if you're with others."

"I feel awkward making small talk with my boss – what are great conversation starters?"

"To begin with, avoid anything that's potentially controversial. Sex, politics and religion are off the menu," advises Courtenay. "When it comes to small talk, keep things inviting. That means steering clear of negative topics like why you're annoyed with your boyfriend, or how tired you are. It's tricky for your boss to respond comfortably to this kind of talk.

"Great places to start include the lovely party venue or a compliment (if it's genuine!). Then move on to universal topics, like a movie you're excited to see, so it's easy for your boss to reciprocate.

"Really nervous? Brainstorm topics in advance, so you don't get tongue-tied. Finally, end the conversation in a positive way that invites further discussion later on: 'It was lovely chatting to you. I look forward to hearing about that film once you've seen it. Enjoy the party!'"



Diamanté necklace
Colette
by Colette
Hayman RXXX

Crystal-detail heels
Dune London RXXX

"What's an appropriate office-party outfit?"

"The trick is to hint at the areas you want to accentuate, but not to show them off in an obvious way," recommends Chata.

"A shift dress that falls just above the knee is a great universal choice. The silhouette accentuates your figure without overtly showing it off. Opt for fabrics that are soft and have movement, but nothing figure-hugging; you don't want to be overly sexy! Add va-va-voom via accessories like chandelier earrings, a jewelled necklace or strappy heels," she adds.

"I had a drunken hookup with a colleague and I'm dreading Monday. What should I do?"

"First things first: an office romance isn't necessarily a bad thing!" says Courtenay. "You're likely to meet like-minded people at work, so if your hookup reflects real feelings, why not use it to initiate a date? Just keep any further romance out of office hours to stay professional.

"If, however, it was a mistake, don't do what you probably want to do by ignoring him on Monday. It'll cause hurt feelings and give other colleagues a reason to gossip. When you bump into him, smile and greet him. Whatever happens, end that first post-party encounter cordially. It will also set the tone for how colleagues view things (awkward or no big deal).

"Still feeling uneasy? Try talking to him directly. But avoid doing this at work; go for coffee (a drink might feel too much like a date), so that you can chat privately."

Ask our coach!

GLAMOUR life coach Kirsten Long shares her expertise with you.

Q I love the sharing and socialising of the festive season, but I don't have the money for it. How can I keep up with all the going out and gifting, without overspending or feeling inadequate or left out?"

The festive season can put a strain on your budget and you are quite right to be considering how you can have fun without overdoing things. You don't want to face up to January with debt from partying that is long forgotten.

So what to do? Get creative! Find a friend or two who share your sensible view of the festive season and get together for a day of baking and gift making. The possibilities are endless! You can make biscuits, sweets, drinks or cards, or surf the net for a plethora of other DIY ideas.

You can also be clever with your wrapping. How about gifts wrapped in plain brown paper with a special message to the recipient in brightly coloured pen? (Turn the page for more great DIY wrapping ideas!) Or, instead of buying gifts, you can give vouchers for your time and talents, like babysitting or a manicure.

If you're having a large festive gathering, you can put a price limit on the amount everyone spends on presents. Discuss and agree on this beforehand, or draw names out of a hat, so each person only has to buy one gift for someone in the group.

And instead of going out, have fun with friends at home with a dress-up theme or a dinner where everyone brings a different course.

Putting some effort into making your festive season fun, special and affordable will set you up for January and a good start to 2015. ▶