

GIFTS FOR RUSSIA

We ask that you prepare three groups of gifts to bring with you to Russia. Before I list the specific guidelines, there are some general things to keep in mind about the gifts:

1. These are gifts, not bribes. Gifts are part of the Russian way of doing business. With the gifts, you are recognizing the status of the people you are dealing with, and showing your appreciation for the assistance that they are giving you. You are also likely to be given gifts yourselves - it's nice to have something to give in return.
2. Because these gifts are not bribes, they will not in any way affect the outcome of your adoption. Families probably worry about the gifts more than they should. You should go shopping, select gifts you think are nice, then try not to worry about it anymore!
3. I will list a retail price guideline for the three categories of gifts. These prices are guidelines only - an indication of the perceived value of the gift. If you can find similar quality merchandise on sale or at the warehouse outlets, please feel free to shop for bargains, as long as the gifts are of good quality.
4. Please do not bring gifts that are of poor quality, or that do not work properly. If you would be insulted if you received a particular item, or if you would be ashamed to give such a gift to a friend, please don't bring it to Russia!
5. Please buy a variety of gifts, not a dozen of the same item.
6. The easiest way to present the gifts is to bring gift bags and tissue paper, rather than wrapping the gifts. Some department stores have classy looking shopping bags and are often happy to donate 20 or so in various sizes.
7. You are going to be carrying these gifts all across Russia - try to keep most of them small, lightweight, unbreakable and/or easy to pack!
8. Your Russian coordinator will either be cueing you as to what to give to whom, or she will give the gifts for you. She may also combine several smaller gifts into one larger gift. Follow her advice on gift giving - she's known these people longer than you have.
9. The following gift guidelines are designed to simply get you thinking in the right direction – they are suggestions, not "requirements." Once you get into the stores, you will see many other perfectly good ideas. A nice way to personalize some of the gifts would be to buy gifts specific to the region you live in, or to the line of work you are in. Remember that all of our Russia clients see this same list.

GIFT GUIDELINES

- A. Six gifts should be for upper level officials you will be working with. A retail price guideline is \$30 to \$50 each. Three of these gifts should be feminine gifts, such as jewelry, perfume, or a cosmetics set. The other three gifts should be gender neutral - you could give them to a woman or to a man. Some examples are a pen and pencil set, a cigarette case and lighter, a briefcase or leather portfolio, desk items such as picture frames or a clock, or food gifts such as candy or nuts.
- B. Ten gifts should be for lower level people you will be dealing with. A retail price guideline for these gifts is \$10 to \$15 each. These can be similar to the upper level gifts, just less expensive (but still good quality!). Some additional ideas would be: nicely packaged scented soaps, table linens, cartons of cigarettes (Marlboros in a hard pack are popular) and items with English lettering or American logos.
- C. Gifts for the orphanage. These gifts should total about \$100 as a retail guideline. Things orphanages can often use are: over-the-counter medicines such as children's Tylenol, vitamins or cough medicine; a prescription of penicillin or other antibiotic in a dosage appropriate for children; children's toothbrushes; medicine for scabies; diaper rash ointment and skin cream; developmental toys; and children's clothing (preferably new). Samples donated by your doctor or dentist are fine, just make sure that the expiration dates have not expired. As long as drugs are in their original packaging and clearly labeled, you shouldn't have any trouble bringing them in through Russian customs.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Some of the gifts in section A and B will go to your Russian coordinator and host families. It's nice to buy something special with them in mind, but don't be offended if they prefer something else you brought! It's a good idea to bring some small items to give away, such as postcards of your hometown or state, inexpensive candy, such as Hershey's Kisses, or packs of cigarettes. You may also want to bring a few snapshots of your family and friends having fun, or at some special occasion - it really helps the Russians get to know you in a more personal way!