

About Our Gift Exchange

Our members started the holiday gift exchange over a decade ago. It now runs twice a year, for summer anniversary celebrations and end-of-the-year festivities, and is one of the most beloved parts of our community. It's a wonderful way to meet other players and make new friends.

How to use this guide

This guide has a lot of information because it is designed to be as in-depth as possible. Don't worry, you don't need to read it all in one go. You can use it as a reference for whatever part of the process you are currently in. You will see "gift exchange" abbreviated as "GE" throughout this guide.

What do the levels look like?

Level 1 is for first-time gifters, and those only wishing to gift a few things. At level 1 you are expected to send gifts worth 25,000 hbs.

Level 2 is for the average participant and it is expected to send gifts worth 250,000 hbs. Most players will gift at level 2.

Level 3 is for those who want to go super over-the-top extravagant. The expected amount is 2.5 million hbs but most level 3 gifters give gifts many times more valuable than that. Level 3 is by invitation only.

You must complete each prior level to move up to the next one.

The GE calendar

Each exchange lasts for 6 weeks:

May and November 15th: Entries open on the 15th and you have until the end of the month to sign up for the exchange and carefully fill out your wish list. More detailed wishlists are **always** preferable.

June and December 1st: At the start of the month you will be randomly assigned someone from your participation level to give gifts to. (You will never be expected to give more than the level you signed up for.) You will be shown their wishlist and have two weeks to plan and shop for their gifts.

June and December 15th: You can give gifts anonymously during this week.

June and December 22nd: You should reveal yourself and give any remaining gifts openly this week. Please keep in mind, that you might not get any gifts before this.

July and January Post Exchange: You are **REQUIRED** to fill out the post-exchange feedback form, as it is how we rate the participation of all members. It only takes a few minutes, and not filling it out will result in penalties to your future exchange participation.

Signing Up

How to find the gift exchange

During gift exchange season, you can find a link to the exchange in the left-hand navigation under the “Seasonal” bin. This link will only appear when the exchange is open or accepting feedback. During the “off-season”, you can go to your member home page, and find a permanent link to the exchange under “Account and Stable Management >> Community >> Gift Exchange”.

Who can sign up

Level 1 really is for you!

Level 1 of our exchange was set up with brand-new members in mind. You may have seen extravagant gifts happening on the forum but I promise those are just older accounts being extra. Our friendly community loves to help out first-timers, and many will give you free stuff to gift for the exchange. The level 1 GE is absolutely obtainable for accounts of any age.

We also have lots of older accounts that are chomping at the bit to send you things via Random Acts of Gifting and they complain each exchange that they don't have enough newbies to pamper. Trust me, you are welcome and wanted at level 1.

How to qualify for Level 1

To enter the gift exchange you need to meet some very basic qualifications, but I promise they are simple to meet.

- 1) **You must make 500 hbs per day in daily bonus from points.** This requirement is just to show you understand the basics of how the game works. You will easily reach this amount simply by creating your first horses in the game. If you can create a horse you can meet this requirement.
- 2) **You must be an active forum participant.** This one scares people off but it is also pretty darn easy. You need to have created a few forum posts and made replies on a few others. While I don't give out the exact numbers to prevent spamming I promise it really is a very small number. Less than 20 replies! You also need to have interacted on the forum in any way in the last month. (Herd helper shares don't count!)

Why do we require this? The sad truth is people who don't post on the forum tend not to be very savvy at the game or invested in it. They tend to flake out and never send any gifts. People who won't put in the minimal effort to make a few posts, usually can't be bothered participating either.

How to qualify for other levels

Level 2: As long as you don't totally whiff it at level 1 (don't worry you will have lots of help) you will qualify for level 2. Level 2 is the main body of the exchange and where most members participate. To qualify for level 2 you need to have: 1) Successfully participated at level 1, 2) Make 5000 hbs a day from your daily showing bonus, 3) Meet the minimum forum activity level. Don't worry, by participating in level one in the prior exchange you already have #1 and #3 on that list covered.

5,000 a day may seem like a big ask when you are first starting out, but just keep collecting show horses and working towards your Achievement Tasks, and you will find you rapidly reach this amount. The game gives you all the points you need to reach this via your starter creates.

Random Acts of Gifting: Signing up for the gift exchange at any level makes your wishlist visible for Random Acts of Gifting. That means any member of the game can send you gifts during the exchange, not just the member assigned to you. You can opt out of RAoG if you would like your list to be private.

To be a gifter with RAoG you will need to have qualified for level 2 of the exchange. We just like to make sure people understand the basics of the game before they can start sending things to other players.

Level 3: Some of our members love to go to extravagant lengths when gifting and we have a category just for them. This is our 2.5 million budget level but realistically many members give way more than that. To qualify for level 3 you must participate in level 2 and give a very extravagant amount like a level 3 gifter would. If you have shown you are one of those lux givers you will get an invitation to level 3. Most of our members are not level 3 gifters and that is completely fine. There is never any pressure to participate in level 3, even if you are qualified.

Do I have to move up?

You should only ever enter the gifting category you are comfortable with. You are never penalized for not moving up to a higher gifting level, and if you want to always send millions in gifts to a level 1 recipient that's great. If you want to keep things low-pressure and just hang out at a lower level and do the expected amount that is great too. It's important that you enjoy the experience so you should pick the best fit for you.

Creating Your Wishlist

In order to sign up for the gift exchange you will need to create your wishlist. The form gives you some ideas of what to put. You do not need to copy and paste this. It is just there to spark some ideas. If you have specific rules for your barn like never using yellow horses, or only collecting horses with the E gene you need to put those on your list. Remember everything you put here will be visible to your gifter and everyone participating in RAoG if you don't opt out. Be polite, and thankful on your list. Kindness counts for a lot.

It can be very helpful to add formatting to your wishlist. Break things up into multiple lines to make it easier to read. Having a range of things to shop for is also nice. They may not be able to get everything on your list. It's also a good idea to include a bit about the projects you are working on. Most of all make sure your wish list is clear and easy to understand.

Your first-ever wishlist can be intimidating but both this guide and the community are here to help you out.

Be specific

The kindest thing you can do for the person sending you gifts is to be specific with your wishlist. I know not everyone is comfortable asking for things but think about how much easier it is to shop for a stranger if they give you somewhere to start. Vague wishlists put extra work on someone trying to do you a kindness.

Even if you are the sort of person who likes anything come up with some specific ideas for your gifter. You don't have to be over the moon crazy about appaloosas to tell put high pt appaloosa show horses on your wishlist. Just give your gifter something to work with. They will thank you for it.

Example Level 1 Wishlist

Hi and thank you for being my gifter,

I am in love with black horses. Silver, pearl, smoky blacks are coat color I'm looking for to start a line. Prefer foundation horses.

It might be a little fancy to have appaloosa or white markings of some kind.

A couple herd helpers I really like are Black Sea and Orca.

I'm in need of show horses any age, prefer over 45 hbs daily but any are very appreciated!

I want to stay away from grey, licensed, and fantasy genes.

Thank you.
-From MergeThis

—

Happy Holidays!

- My bootstrap herd could use straws from *** stallions. Any era is fine. I avoid fantasy genes. I also like recent-era foundations.

- I generally lean toward darker colors.

-My favorite herd helper is Olive Branch and herd helpers that are similar.

-I am always interested in show horses of any level with points, and/or show horses with a PT of 12 or more at any age. I always need more show horses.

-I love getting my hands on bloodlines I would not normally have in my barns. I love fancy tack editor designs, cute names, etc.

I appreciate you so much and hope you have a nice time in the exchange
-From Abhean

Thanks for participating in the exchange to be my gifter!

I'm always running out of HBs, so HB donations or show ponies with a lot of lifetime points would really help me out.

If gifting straws or horses the types of horses I like are:

Medium boned, horse sized horses.

Foundation horses need to be perfect or exceptionally perfect.

I like Dun, Silver, Rabicano, Sabino, and White 3.

I prefer deep/dark coat colors over light/pale coat colors.

I would prefer mares if gifting horses, unless a stallion is really special with some rare genes like S+, Sabino 2, White 3, KP, gp, etc.

I do not like appaloosa, splash, white 1 or white 2.

-From RamshornSportHorses

What to ask for at Level 1

This list is simply a jumping-off point to give you an idea of the kinds of things you can ask for. Feel free to be creative and branch out. You can ask for things worth up to 25,000 hbs.

- Give a variety of options in case your recipient can't fulfill parts of your request.
- Rank Special foundations if they are not particularly rare or expensive.
- Show horse foals from high-ability sires.
- Show horses with points.
- If you have a basic upgrade you can ask for straws and/or embryos.
- If you have a premium account you can ask for eggs.
- Foundation creates with specific sizes and colors.
- Lined horses with genes you love as long as they are not licensed genes.
- Horses with specific Breed Characteristics applied.
- Art for your forum avatar and footer, or for your best stallion.
- **Experienced Players:** Keep your requests simple. Spell out abbreviations fully and explain terms like "evenly bred" or "bootstrapping" if you use them in your list. Remember this is the new player level.

What not to ask for at Level 1

- Things worth more than 25,000. For example, don't ask for a *** star stallion that is worth millions. A few straws from one is much more reasonable. Don't ask for a rank special that is rare and worth hundreds of thousands of hbs.
- Anything with licensed genes. New members normally don't have licenses so can't send these.
- Anything that must be purchased with real money
- Anything that requires GMT work.
- Try to make sure anything you ask for can be obtained by a brand-new player. Ultra-rare specific combos may simply be out of reach for them.

Level 2 Wishlists

At level two you can ask for things worth up to 250,000. You can include the things that you can't ask for in level 1, but give a wide number of options in case your gifter can't fulfill parts of your. Keep in mind that licensed genes and anything to do with gmt work or real money are very unlikely and you should never expect to get those things at level 2.

Level 3 Wishlists

This is the sky's the limit category. Members signed up for this level are planning to go over the top so feel free to be over the top with your lists.

Random Acts of Gifting

Once you have created your wish list you will have the option to opt out of Random Acts of Gifting. Some members may wish to do this to keep their wishlist private, or because they really don't want to receive gifts, but I ask you to leave it checked if at all possible. Our members love sending gifts, and many only participate in the exchange by sending RAoG gifts. We never have enough people to send gifts to. Please help us out by allowing them to send you gifts.

Signing up on multiple accounts

You are allowed to enter the exchange on multiple accounts and/or multiple levels but there are a few rules you must follow to do so. First, all accounts you own on a game server are supposed to use the same email. Accounts using the same email will never be assigned to one another. Take this moment to make sure your accounts are using the same email to prevent being assigned yourself.

Next, if you are doing multiple entries you need to be very careful not to ask for the same specific thing over and over again. For example, there are only so many 14+ PT Bay Rabiano drafts on a server, and if you ask for that multiple times, you force gifters to compete for those limited few which isn't fair to them. You can of course ask for general things like "show horses" many times, but be mindful of your repeated requests.

Finally, if you are entering multiple levels we ask you to not just copy and paste your higher-level wish list into lower levels. Every wish list you submit should be appropriate for the level it's submitted for.

After you sign up

You can go back and edit or even delete your gift exchange entry until the end of May/November. Please don't start shopping for your recipient until the 1st when you are given your gifting assignment.

During the Exchange

Once you have been assigned your recipient you can check out their wishlist and start making a shopping plan. Don't worry if you don't understand parts of the list. This guide will break down some common confusion points, and there are several ways to get help.

On the 1st you will be sent your assignment's wish list. You can start planning and shopping now.

On the 15th the gift exchange page will have forms where you can send your gifts directly and secretly to your recipient. Any gift that can be sent via the exchange page should be. It tracks the gifts and lets your recipient know when you have sent something.

On the 22nd you should reveal yourself to your recipient. If you don't do this the game will reveal you before the end of the exchange but it is always best to send a nice little note letting them know it was you. You can do this in your gift exchange chat with them or via a forum private message.

Getting Help

Asking your recipient: If you don't understand something in the wishlist the best thing to do is just ask your recipient. They wrote it, they know what it means. If something is impossible to obtain or simply out of budget it is also totally ok to ask if they have an alternative that will work.

To talk to your recipient go to the gift exchange home page then click on the link that says "Click here to send messages to [Thier Name]". This will open up a chat box where you can ask them anything you want. Asking is better than assuming. It's always ok to just ask.

GE Chat Room: You can also ask other members to explain things for you. Go to the left-hand navigation, under "Community" and select "Buddy Chat". Under "Pan Server Chat Rooms" locate the link for "Anonymous Gift Exchange Chat". Here you can post any question you want without giving yourself away.

*You are allowed to reveal yourself here if you want. For example, if someone is looking for *** silver black straws on Mesa you can say "Contact BritteyDowns on Mesa, I have straws."*

How to Be a Great Gifter

Making Your Gifts Special

Remember that the point of the gift exchange is to make your recipient feel cared about. We ask you to wait to start shopping for the exchange until after you get your assignment to make sure you are gifting thoughtfully and not just checking boxes.

- You can make your gifting special by paying close attention to their wishlist. Make sure you aren't sending things they asked to not get.
- A great way to come up with gifting ideas is to search through your recipient's barns to see what kind of horses they are collecting.
- Instead of just sending a horse as is, consider adding themed names, notes, or tack to the horse. Dressing them up a little can really show you care.
- Don't just shop your own barn. Use the search to find horses for sale or auction that you can purchase. During the exchange, it is common for members to search for horses that meet their recipient's wishlist and then private message the owner of that horse. Just because a horse is not up on the public lists does not mean the owner won't sell or offer genetic material from that horse for the gift exchange.
- Remember you don't need an upgrade to buy straws, eggs, or embryos for your recipient. You should make sure they have the needed upgrades to use them though.
- When you send something it will automatically log it, but it's still nice to check in with your recipient to make sure they are receiving their gifts and that they are a good fit.
- If you sent something without using the gift exchange page you must let them know in the gift exchange chat. Things very often get missed and a gift that is never seen is hard to appreciate.
- The most important thing is not how much you spend but how much care you show.

The Search is Your Friend

The most critical tool for any member in the exchange is the in-game search. The search is a powerful way to look for horses with specific genetics, eras, sizes, points etc. Once you have your wish list take to the search. You can filter by horses for sale, auction, and AI sales in order to find things to buy for your recipient. Run these searches often as the lists change frequently throughout the season.

None for sale? No problem. It is very common to run into a conundrum where the horse that would be perfect for your recipient is not on offer. During the exchange, it is normal practice to reach out to the owner of horses you like and see if they are willing to sell the horse or genetic material from the horse. Keep in mind that the answer might be no, or the horse may be out of budget for you. As long as you are polite in your request no one will be offended by you asking.

Do I need to get everything they ask for

Members are expected to make a wish list with a range of gifting options with the expectation that not everything may be obtainable. That means the expectation is you won't get them everything. Do your best to prioritize what you think you can make nice gifts with and don't sweat about getting every last thing. The focus should be on sending gifts that they will enjoy, not sending every possible thing they might want.

What if I can't get what they ask for

When you first get your recipient's wish list it may seem overwhelming if you are a new player. Don't panic! Remember just because you don't have it in your barn does not mean you can't get it. Let's break the issue down into the possibilities.

I don't know what this item is: You might run into the issue of not understanding what your recipient asked for. No problem. You can ask your recipient to clarify or post in the Anonymous GE Chat and ask an older member to help you figure it out. Most confusion can be quickly cleared up.

This item is out of budget: Sometimes people ask for something that is out of budget for the level. This could be because they don't expect to get it for them but put it there in case a big spender or RAoG participant feels like sending it. Never feel like you need to get something for your recipient that is out of budget. It's simply not expected of you too. If you like you can send your recipient a message like "Sorry, a chimeric ** star stallion is out of budget for me. Is there something you would like instead?" It is always ok to ask for an alternative.

I don't know how to find this item: A frequent issue new members run into is how to obtain the gift being asked for. You might know what show horses with ice and watercolor are but not know how to find any. A few ways to find horses are using the search (explained above), browsing listings on the forum, checking out the buddy chat rooms, and if all else fails posting on the Anonymous Gift Exchange chat asking if anyone on your server has something that fits.

It's best not to post what you are looking for on the forum, as you will give yourself away doing that. Try to keep your identity a secret until you reveal yourself.

Don't forget you don't need an upgrade to purchase straws/eggs/embryos, you don't need a license to purchase geldings and spayed mares with licensed genes, and you don't need to own a Breed Characteristic to buy horses with a special Breed Characteristic applied.

Gift Exchange Etiquette

There are a few tips to follow to make sure you have a great exchange

- Communicate regularly with your gifter. Silence makes people feel abandoned.
- If you send a gift, make sure your recipient knows about it.
- If you will only be sending a small number of gifts, or will be sending them late let your recipient know.

- Never wait until the last minute to send a gift. It really makes your recipient feel like you forgot them.
- It's normally disappointing to get your own lines as gifts. If your recipient sold that horse it was for a reason and they don't want to get it back. If you have a great idea for a gift involving your recipient's lines just ask them first.
- Give thoughtful gifts not hand-me-downs. That means try to gift young horses, shop outside of just your barn, and don't send someone a gift you got in a prior exchange unless it really is perfect.
- When you get your own gifts don't sell them off during the exchange. It's like tossing a gift in the trash in front of the person who gave it to you. Horses you don't need can be made into show horses, or if you really need to, sold after the exchange and feedback are finished.
- Most important of all say thank you! Don't leave your gifter hanging. Let them know you appreciate the work they put into gifting to you.

How do I...

How do I calculate how much I have sent?

First of all, remember it is the amount of care you put into your gifts that counts the most. The exact amount you spend isn't critical as long as your recipient feels like you care about them. If you send your recipient a single candy or seapony you created, worth 125,000 hbs, and nothing else it does not seem like you cared very much about them even if the total value was worth more than your level amount.

You should calculate your sent amount not based on what you spent but instead on the value of what you sent. If someone gifted you straws for 1hb that are worth 1000 hbs, you can use 1000 as the value. If you created a horse for 2500, but it is a herd helper with 50,000 you can use 50,000 as the value. If you created a horse for 2500, and spent 3000 in testing on it but it is still worth 2500 after testing then the value is 2500.

Not sure how to value a gift? You can ask in the Anonymous GE Chat for an older member to help you make an estimate.

At the end of the day ask yourself, if I received these gifts would I feel like the person who sent them tried to make a nice experience for me? If you can honestly answer yes to that question then you have completely succeeded at the gift exchange no matter how much you actually spent. Many of the coolest gifts our members have ever sent didn't cost a single hb.

How do I see what gene licenses my recipient owns?

You may wish to know what gene licenses your recipient has unlocked, particularly at higher exchange levels. Click on your recipient's name on the GE page, or anywhere else in the game, to pull up their public member page. Scroll down until you see "[X]/60 Owned Closed Gene Licenses", and click the > sign to open the license info.

How do I know if they like my gifts?

Not sure if your gifts are going over well? It is best to just ask your recipient in your gift exchange chat.

How do I thank my gifter?

You can say thank you right in your gift exchange chat at any point before the end of the month. Once you know who your recipient is you can send them a private message on the forum. There will also be stickied show-off threads on the forum where you can publicly say thank you and show off the gifts you got in the exchange. Please don't make your own forum post to say thanks. Either do so via PM or on the designated forum threads created for them. The board gets a little overrun and unreadable when everyone makes individual posts.

After the exchange

The exchange ends at the end of the month. Once July or January rolls around it's time to do some housekeeping. It's really important to fill out the exchange feedback it's how we know who to move up and who might not be a good fit for the exchange. Letting us know about great gifters or poor ones helps make our exchange better for everyone each year.

What if I receive no gifts?

This is very rare but does happen on occasion. Please wait until the exchange is over. Do not post anything publicly about it, as some people procrastinate until the last moment. Once the exchange is finished you will get a feedback form to fill out. Let us know on that form within 7 days and you will be assigned for makeup gifting. We make sure everyone gets something!

If you don't get assigned to makeup gifting after 7 days then please send Ammit a private message on the forum. Sometimes I forget to check the feedback list, I will get you sorted right away.

Feedback and the Exchange Audit

After the exchange ends you will have two weeks to send in your feedback about your recipient and your gifter. Failure to fill out your feedback will prevent you from advancing in the exchange and repeated failures can get you banned from the gift exchange. Don't hurt your fellow participants by failing to fill this out.

What is the Audit

After feedback has been submitted a small team will look over everyone's feedback and the records of what they gifted. From this, they will decide who moves up or stays at the same level. On very rare occasions they may even ban someone for doing something like not giving a single gift

It might feel a little weird knowing strangers will be looking over everything you gifted to decide if it was a “good job or not”. The audit is a ton of work and trust me I would much rather not do it, but the reality is that some people will always flake out on stuff like this and they ruin the experience for everyone else. The only way we can have an exchange as robust, generous, and long-lasting as we do is to evaluate however one did.

Who are the auditors

The auditors are a group of 2 to 5 people, it varies each exchange. They go over the feedback sent and make the call about how people did. They are pointedly not allowed to be active members of the server they are auditing to make sure they have no bias about certain players.

What are Auditors looking for

At all levels good communication and politeness count in spades. We want this exchange to be pleasant for everyone participating.

The main they look for is if you made your recipient feel cared about. That trumps everything else. After that, they will look over what you sent to make sure you follow the basic guidelines. If you are a level 1 gifter and did those things you will get moved up to level 2. If you did not get moved up you can ask for help to figure out what went wrong.

If you are gifting and level two and did a good job you will stay at level 2. This is normal and does not mean you did anything wrong. Level 2 is the main part of the exchange and where most members participate. The auditors love it when they hear you put a lot of care in. Did you pay close attention to wishlists? Did you scope out your recipient's barns for ideas? Were you careful and thoughtful about what you sent? All of these things are positive marks that increase your chances of being invited to level 3 in the future.

Level 3 is invitation only and it can be pretty tough to get invited to level 3. Here are some things the auditors are looking for:

- You need to show you can gift really extravagantly. Again it is not about the amount spent. Your recipient should feel like really pulled out all the stops to make them feel special. This often takes the form of some real-life money spent, and millions of hbs spent, but does not have to be that.
- Do you understand how the game works? Being game-savvy is an important part of being one of the best gifters in the game. Those members who really understand how the game works are more likely to be moved up.
- Your past performance here counts. If you have always been a lavish gifter you are more likely to be moved up than someone who has always been less so. It's nothing personal but they want to see proof that you are going to be a good addition to level 3.
- Level 3 should be an overwhelmingly positive experience and if you can't handle conflict in a cool-headed way level 3 is not for you. If you want advice on how to qualify for level 3 you are always welcome to ask, but making a bunch of drama over not getting moved

up, or worse attacking other members over the exchange will get you blacklisted from level 3.

Something that is important to note: The auditors have notes for every single time you participate, and every time counts. If you were kind of a low-effort participant for 3 exchanges in a row you have more to prove and a harder time moving up than a person who was a super generous gifter every time.

Add info about gifting licenses and horses with licenses