

## Wedding Anniversary Meanings

[Below you will find the wedding anniversary meanings for the gifts traditionally associated with each year of marriage.]

No one knows precisely when wedding anniversaries were first celebrated. But the tradition is believed to go back at least to the Middle Ages. At that time in the Germanic regions of Europe, a husband crowned his wife with a silver wreath on the 25th anniversary of their wedding day. If the couple was fortunate to live long enough, the husband presented his wife a gold wreath on their 50th wedding anniversary.

By the beginning of the 20th century, an additional 6 anniversaries were celebrated - the 1st, 5th, 10th, 15th, 20th, and 75th year for a total of 8.

In 1922 Emily Post published *Etiquette* in which she identified symbolic gifts associated with each of these 8 milestone anniversaries: paper, wood, tin, crystal, china, silver, gold, and diamond.

15 years later, the Jewelers of America expanded her list to include materials for every one of the first 20 years of marriage and every 5 years thereafter. Thus was born the traditional list of gifts and wedding anniversary meanings we have today.

### But why were the various materials chosen as gifts to symbolize specific anniversaries?

To a certain extent, the reasons are clouded in mystery. However, it is generally believed that increasingly durable gifts were chosen for successive years to represent the progressive strengthening of the marriage relationship. As the years go by, the gifts increase in strength and worth from paper to diamond.

### Would you like to know the wedding anniversary meanings behind the gifts for each anniversary year?

Look no further. The meaning, symbolism, and lore for each are described below.

#### Paper

The first year of marriage is like a clean sheet of paper, a new beginning upon which to write your passage through the years together. Also like paper, it is fragile and can easily rip, not having yet been tried by the fires of adversity and the storms of life.



#### Cotton

Like the interwoven fibers of cotton, the second year of marriage brings a couple closer together as their lives become increasingly intertwined. And as cotton is at the same time both strong and soft, the couple is learning how to be flexible and adapt to each other's needs.



#### Leather

Leather has traditionally symbolized protection and covering; our ancestors covered and protected themselves from the elements with the leather hides of animals. The bonds of marriage offer security and shelter as each partner takes care of the other.



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Now in its third year, the growing relationship is becoming a source of stability for the married couple.



### Fruit & Flowers

During the fourth year of marriage, the budding relationship is beginning to blossom like a flower and ripen like fruit. Just as fruit nourishes the body and flowers the soul, so the deepening commitment and nurturing love of the couple brings refreshment and renewal to the marriage.



### Wood

In ancient times, trees symbolized strength and wisdom. By the fifth year of marriage, the married couple is developing strong, deep roots like a venerable oak tree and is gaining insight and understanding from the mistakes and stumblings of the first five years. The pair has learned the most important lesson of all and the secret to a successful marriage: forgiveness.



### Candy

As candy is to the taste, so romance is to marriage: sugary sweet. Celebrating the sixth year of marriage offers a time to rekindle the flames of love and passion that brought the two of you together. In older times, iron also symbolized the sixth anniversary. A strong and sturdy metal that brings good luck, may good fortune shine on your marriage all the days of your life.



### Copper & Wool

Both copper and wool are known for producing heat. Therefore they represent warmth, comfort, safety, and security - necessary ingredients for a healthy and stable marriage. Reflect on these traits as you celebrate seven years together.



### Bronze

The gifts for wedding anniversaries tend to increase in substance and value over time as marriage itself should grow and strengthen over time. Bronze is stronger than both iron and copper, symbols of earlier years of marriage, because it is a blend of two metals (copper and tin). This mixture represents the union of two lives and the strength resulting from combining time with perseverance.



### Pottery & Willow

A potter molds a lump of clay, shaping it on the potter's wheel, and then fires it in the oven, creating something both rich and beautiful. So too, the marriage of two people is molded and shaped by choices and experiences, fired in the oven of adversity, and over time, something beautiful emerges.



### Tin

Tin symbolizes preservation and longevity. At one time, food was stored in tin-plated iron cans. The tin protected the iron from rust and corrosion, preserving the food inside, potentially forever. A couple at the milestone anniversary of ten years has the ability to go the distance. Therefore, the tenth anniversary should be celebrated with special honor.



## Steel

Steel is one of the strongest, most durable metals in the world, and therefore a fitting symbol for the eleventh anniversary. The cord binding the marriage together can no longer be easily broken, if it ever could. Strength and permanence define this milestone anniversary.



## Silk

A couple that reaches twelve years of marriage has, undoubtedly, sailed through many rough waters and overcome a great many obstacles in their relationship. Having been strengthened by enduring difficulties, they now eagerly anticipate that the road ahead will be smooth as silk. It is time to enjoy the finer things in life. Celebrate this anniversary by taking time to indulge in luxury and pleasure.



## Lace

As lace signifies refined beauty and elegance, so a marriage of thirteen years exemplifies polished and perfected love. The passage of time has created a delicate but strong object of beauty.



## Ivory

Ivory symbolizes purity and innocence. Rare and beautiful, this precious commodity signifies the integrity and fidelity of the marriage relationship and the extraordinary sense of commitment two people must have to make a marriage last fourteen years. Loyalty and devotion are qualities worthy of commemoration.



## Crystal

Crystal is the first truly expensive gift in the traditional anniversary list. The costliness of crystal is representative of the sacrifice and investment the couple has made to the marriage over the past fifteen years. Crystal also symbolizes clarity and transparency, reflecting the state of the couple's relationship. They now know each other better than they know themselves.



## China

China symbolizes the beautiful, elegant, and fragile nature of love. It is a reminder not to take your marriage for granted, but to continue to care for it so your love will flourish. In addition, just as China, although fragile, is also durable and long-lasting, so a twenty-year marriage has withstood the test of time.



## Silver

Silver is one of the most precious metals known to man. It has always been prized the world over and considered very valuable. It is therefore an appropriate symbol for the twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Like silver, may your marriage continue to shine in splendor and radiance all of your days as you grow old together.



## Pearl

Lying hidden deep inside the shell of an oyster is one of the most exquisite and treasured gems imaginable: the pearl. Symbolizing hidden beauty, the pearl reminds the maturing couple that true beauty comes from within and that what is most valuable is the shared experience of life with another.

## Coral

Coral has often been called the "garden of the sea" because it covers the ocean floor. In ancient times it was considered sacred and believed to contain magical properties of protection from sickness and harm. It was also thought to represent the life-force due to its blood-red appearance. Like coral, loyalty and commitment are the lifeblood of a good marriage and love the shield that protects the union.



## Ruby

Symbolizing love and passion, the ruby is one of the most coveted gemstones of all. Within the heart of this stone is thought to lie a flame of fire that grows brighter with each passing year, just like the flame of a forty-year marriage.



## Sapphire

For long ages the stone of royalty, the sapphire is the perfect gem to honor a forty-five year marriage. Two people together for this length of time are a shining example to all married couples. Theirs is a union worthy of admiration and respect.



## Gold

Only one gift can rightly capture the crowning achievement of lifelong love: gold. Symbolizing prosperity, strength, and wisdom, it represents the essence of what a fifty-year marriage should be. Congratulations. Here's to many more years of health and wedded bliss. Cheers!



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