

B2-C1 Worksheet: Oscar Gift Bags and Celebrity Excess - 20 March 2026

Article

Every year, awards season throws up familiar debates about glamour, privilege and taste, but the unofficial Oscar gift bags handed to top nominees still manage to raise eyebrows. This year's bags, put together by marketing company Distinctive Assets, were reportedly worth about \$350,000 each. They were packed not only with beauty products and snacks, but also with luxury holidays, design services and high-end wellness treatments. Although the Academy is not involved, the bags have become part of the wider Oscars circus and a useful way for smaller brands to get their foot in the door with celebrities.

Supporters argue that the bags are less about greed than promotion. Companies pay to be included because one public mention from a famous actor can bring in huge attention. Critics, however, say the whole exercise is wildly over the top at a time when many people are trying to cut back, shop more carefully and live with less. For them, the bags symbolise a culture in which excess is brushed off as harmless fun, even when the price tag seems impossible to justify.

Still, the story touches a nerve because it reflects a wider question about modern consumption. Do people really admire luxury, or are they simply curious about it from a distance? In the end, the Oscar gift bags may be a publicity stunt, but they also open up a broader conversation about status, shopping habits and whether more is really better. That is why the debate keeps cropping up, long after the red carpet has been rolled away.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The official Academy organisation prepares the Oscar gift bags itself.
2. The bags this year were reportedly worth around \$350,000 each.
3. Smaller brands may benefit from being included in the bags.
4. The article suggests that all criticism of the bags comes only from journalists.
5. Some people see the bags as a symbol of unnecessary excess.
6. The article says most people now admire luxury without questioning it.
7. The bags can be seen as both a marketing tool and a publicity stunt.
8. The debate about these gifts usually ends as soon as the ceremony finishes.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. throw up	A. to reduce spending or use
2. raise eyebrows	B. to be removed or taken away
3. get a foot in the door	C. to cause surprise or disapproval
4. bring in	D. to cause a strong emotional reaction
5. cut back	E. to attract or generate something
6. brush off	F. to treat something as unimportant
7. touch a nerve	G. to assemble or organise something
8. crop up	H. to produce or create something unexpectedly
9. roll away	I. to appear again from time to time
10. put together	J. to gain an initial opportunity

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. nominee	A. beauty and excitement linked to wealth
2. glamour	B. more than is necessary
3. privilege	C. the act of buying or using goods
4. luxury	D. great comfort and expensive quality
5. justify	E. public attention created by media
6. consumption	F. a person officially chosen for an award
7. status	G. a detached or removed position
8. publicity	H. to show that something is reasonable
9. excess	I. a special advantage not given to everyone
10. distance	J. social importance or rank

Use the new language

Please choose 5 words or phrases and make your own sentence using the new word or phrase.

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. Do stories about celebrity luxury interest you, or do you ignore them?
2. What kinds of things do you personally cut back on when you want to save money?
3. Have shopping habits changed for you in recent years?
4. Do you think gift bags like these are harmless fun or too much?
5. Which feels more attractive to you now: luxury or simplicity?
6. Do famous people influence what ordinary people buy?
7. Have you ever watched the Oscars or followed red carpet fashion?
8. What kinds of items would you actually value in a gift bag?

Student B

1. Why do stories about wealth and excess so often touch a nerve?
2. Is minimalism a genuine lifestyle choice or just another trend?
3. Should companies spend money on celebrity marketing like this, or is it wasteful?
4. How much does status influence modern shopping behaviour?
5. Do publicity stunts help brands get a foot in the door, or do they damage trust?
6. Is celebrity culture becoming less powerful, or does it still shape public taste?
7. Why do debates about luxury and excess keep cropping up?
8. What would a healthier relationship with consumption look like?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=F, 2=T, 3=T, 4=F, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T, 8=F

Phrase Match: 1=H, 2=C, 3=J, 4=E, 5=A, 6=F, 7=D, 8=I, 9=B, 10=G

Synonym Match: 1=F, 2=A, 3=I, 4=D, 5=H, 6=C, 7=J, 8=E, 9=B, 10=G

Example sentences with the phrases

1. Long journeys often throw up problems you did not expect.
2. His decision to wear trainers to the wedding raised a few eyebrows.
3. The internship helped her get a foot in the door at a top design company.
4. Good customer service can bring in loyal clients very quickly.
5. We are trying to cut back on takeaway food and cook more at home.
6. She brushed off the criticism and carried on with the project.
7. The film touched a nerve because it reminded people of recent events.
8. The same argument crops up every time the budget is discussed.
9. By midnight, the market stalls had been rolled away and the square was empty.
10. They put together a simple plan before speaking to the manager.