

B2-C1 English Worksheet

Unwanted Gifts: The Stress of Giving and Receiving Presents

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Article

An unwanted present can turn a generous gesture into a social test. According to a recent Washington Post feature, recipients may experience disappointment, resentment or even guilt while trying to put on a brave face. When a gift is inappropriate or fails to reflect someone's tastes, it can fall short of expectations. Yet an awkward choice is not necessarily a deliberate insult. Psychologists caution against the temptation to read too much into an ambiguous gesture: the giver's intention may simply have been kind. The situation is especially uncomfortable when people feel an obligation to react enthusiastically or return the favour.

The pressure to keep up appearances can damage relationships. Some recipients brush off their frustration rather than explain why a present felt insensitive; others make a fuss and embarrass everyone. Experts recommend offering sincere thanks for the thought without pretending to admire the object. A tactful response acknowledges generosity while protecting the recipient's feelings. There is little benefit in forcing someone to hold on to something they will never use. Once the gift has been given, its new owner should have the autonomy to exchange it or give away an unwanted item.

Sometimes a present feels deliberately critical, perhaps making an unwelcome comment about someone's appearance. The article advises people not to confront the giver impulsively in front of others. Instead, they can bring up the issue privately later and explain why it was hurtful. Such a conversation may offer reassurance, allow both sides to clear the air and avoid unnecessary tension. The broader question is whether presents express affection or create expectations. A thoughtful gift can strengthen a bond, but genuine gratitude should not demand dishonesty or permanent storage space.

True/False

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

No.	Statement	T / F
1	Receiving a gift can create guilt even if the giver means well.	
2	Every inappropriate present is described as an intentional attack.	
3	Recipients are expected to keep all their presents indefinitely.	
4	The advice separates sincere gratitude from pretending to admire an object.	
5	A present that appears critical of someone may justify a later private discussion.	
6	Public confrontation is recommended as the first response to a hurtful present.	
7	Recipients may feel pressure to respond positively or offer something in return.	
8	The text argues that giving a present guarantees a stronger relationship.	

Phrase Match

Match each phrase (1-10) to the correct definition (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. put on a brave face	A. give an item to somebody without payment
2. fall short of	B. dismiss a concern instead of considering it carefully
3. read too much into	C. resolve tension through honest discussion
4. keep up appearances	D. fail to reach a desired standard or expectation
5. brush off	E. react with excessive complaints or attention
6. make a fuss	F. introduce a subject into a conversation
7. hold on to	G. hide disappointment by appearing cheerful
8. give away	H. maintain a positive public impression that may be false
9. bring up	I. find more meaning in something than is justified
10. clear the air	J. keep something rather than get rid of it

Synonym Match

Match each word (1-10) to a synonym (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. resentment	A. genuine
2. inappropriate	B. unclear
3. ambiguous	C. thoughtless
4. obligation	D. bitterness
5. frustration	E. diplomatic
6. insensitive	F. irritation
7. sincere	G. comfort
8. tactful	H. independence
9. autonomy	I. unsuitable
10. reassurance	J. duty

Use the New Language

Choose 5 words or phrases and write your own sentences.

No.	Your sentence
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Discussion Questions

Student A	Student B
1. Have you ever had to put on a brave face when opening a present?	1. Is the intention behind a gift more important than its usefulness?
2. Which friend or relative is the hardest person to buy for?	2. When does sparing someone's feelings become outright dishonesty?
3. Would you prefer one meaningful gift or several smaller surprises?	3. Should givers have any say in what happens to a present afterwards?
4. Have you ever given away a present you never used?	4. How do cultural expectations change what counts as a generous gift?
5. What unwritten rules about gift-giving exist in your family?	5. Is regifting a sensible way to reduce waste, or a breach of trust?
6. Has a particular gift ever brought back a powerful memory?	6. When might a present cross the line into criticism or manipulation?
7. How comfortable are you telling someone exactly what you would like?	7. Do gift registries help prevent disappointment or remove spontaneity?
8. Have you ever misunderstood another person's taste when choosing a gift?	8. Has commercial pressure distorted the meaning of gift-giving?

Answer Key

True/False

1=T, 2=F, 3=F, 4=T, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T, 8=F

Phrase Match

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

Synonym Match

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

Example Sentences With the Phrases

No.	Example sentence
1	He tried to put on a brave face when he received a second coffee machine.
2	The present seemed to fall short of her expectations.
3	Try not to read too much into one thoughtless choice.
4	Guests sometimes keep up appearances at large family celebrations.
5	She did not want to brush off his concerns about the gift.
6	Nobody wanted to make a fuss during the birthday dinner.
7	You are not obliged to hold on to every unwanted item.
8	They decided to give away the unused kitchen equipment.
9	It is easier to bring up an awkward subject in private.
10	An open conversation helped the relatives clear the air.