

Saying "Thank You" – Why It's So Important and How To Do It

"Silent gratitude isn't much use to anyone"

G.B. Stern

Saying thank you – it's everyday etiquette and a simple courtesy that takes just a moment. It costs nothing, not even effort.

But it's also one of the most important ways in which we interact with others, both those closest to us and those with whom we have contact for the briefest of times.

We say thank you for gifts, thank you for special favors, and thank you for assistance in times of need. But it's not only the big things where thank you matters. We also say thank you as we're handed our change in the store, thank you to someone who holds the door for us, and thank you to the person who passes us the salt at dinner.

It's a phrase that is pretty much ubiquitous. But it's never unwelcome, and it can mean so much.

Do you say thank you enough?

So, how often do you say thank you? Do you say thank you only to those you love, those you wish to impress or judge to be important? Or do you liberally sprinkle your daily interactions with these two golden words?

How often have you felt bad because you forgot to say thank you, or didn't take a moment to thank someone properly? And how often have you felt resentful or cross when someone else failed to say thank you to you? 'They could have at least said thank you!', you think. Or, 'how rude! She didn't even bother to say thank you!'

Many social commentators bemoan how rude people are in modern life. And in particular they despair about how people neglect to be grateful – specifically that they fail to say thank you. In fact, in *Talk to the Hand: The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the World Today* author [Lynn Truss](#) cites the humble 'thank you' as one of the major weapons essential to stemming the tide of everyday rudeness.

The message is clear: Forgetting or neglecting to say thank you is rude. Not only does it upset and annoy people, it makes you look bad. However important or busy you are, it's always right to thank people, however small the thing they have done for you.

But just why is it that saying thank you is so very important? Why do we feel so hurt and let down when someone **doesn't** thank us? Isn't it just an empty ritual? A meaningless reflex?

Well, the fact is that 'thank you' has something truly magic about it. Like sorry, it's just words, but they act as shorthand for so much more. Thank you shows our appreciation and conveys our gratitude. But more than that, it is a sign of respect to the person who has helped you (or given you something). It is an indication you do not take them for

granted, and an acknowledgement that they matter. And that is why saying thank you matters.

The Rewards of Saying Thank You

Saying thank you certainly matters to the person you say it to, but it can have great rewards for you too. Sure, you can get a long way without it, but you'll get a lot further with it!

People who make a habit of saying thank you receive better service. What's more, they often find that people are ready and willing to 'go the extra mile' on their behalf. And of course showing gratitude to family, friends and colleagues will result in positive payback in all kinds of ways, from a happier home life to increased success in business. In fact several well-known business gurus claim that the secret of their success is almost entirely down to taking the time to say thank you.

Perhaps this isn't so surprising when you consider that studies repeatedly show that thanks and appreciation are in many cases a bigger motivator than a pay rise!

Being polite isn't just the **right** thing to do, it's also the **savvy** thing to do.

How to say thank you

Saying thank you is simple. In fact it's so easy that it's amazing that so many people get it wrong, or fail to do it at all. There are just four important steps to saying thank you effectively and successfully in person:

1. Make eye contact (very important if you want to appear sincere!)
2. Smile
3. Speak in a clear, friendly voice. Don't mutter!
4. Be specific – what exactly are you thanking the person for?

For example:

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Thank you for your help with this.  
Thank you for your thoughtfulness.  
Thank you for the delicious dinner.
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If you're thanking someone you know then it is also good to add their name:

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Mary, thank you so much for giving me a lift today.
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And if you know the person well, and if it is appropriate, you can add a touch on the arm, a hug, even a kiss.

And that's it. Job done.

Of course, if you don't have the chance to express your thanks in person, or if you don't feel that a verbal thank you is sufficient, then you should send a thank you note, card or letter. Writing them is not hard! You'll find all the help you need right here on this site.

Dos and Don'ts for Writing Thank You Notes, Cards and Letters

"I wrote a thank you note that instant because whenever I get a present I have to write a note right away that very day if I'm going to have any manners at all."

Lucy Rose in *Here's the Thing about Me* by Katy Kelly

There's nothing complicated about writing thank you notes, cards and letters, but you'll make a great job of it if you keep these simple Dos and Don'ts in mind.

1. DO hand write your thank you notes, cards and letters if possible. It shows that you've made an effort, and it's one of the nicest ways to express appreciation. Having said that, if your handwriting is truly awful then it may actually be preferable to send a typewritten note. After all, there's no point in making the effort to send a thank you card if what you write is illegible.

Remember – the most important thing is to **send** the card or note. If it's the prospect of writing by hand that's holding you back, then type. A type written note is always going to be infinitely better than no note at all!

2. DON'T delay writing your thank you notes. And once they're written, make sure to mail them as soon as possible. Writing thank you letters, notes and cards is something that is amazingly easy to put off doing, and before you know it you'll start feeling the need to apologize as well as say thank you. If you do procrastinate, remember that however long you've left it, it is always worth sending a thank you note – better late than never!

3. DO select stationery that suits the recipient and the situation. A pretty pastel card might be just what Grandma loves, but it's less suitable for your boss! A seascape or landscape is probably more suitable for a condolence thank you letter than a vibrantly colored abstract.

4. DO personalize your thank you note and be specific in your thanks. Make sure to address the recipient by name, and sign the note in a legible manner. Even if a thank you note is typed it really should be signed by hand. And it's a nice touch to hand write the greeting (Dear Sarah...) too. **DO** also make the effort to refer to the specific present or favor received. 'Thank you for the bag, it's really nice', is lazy and doesn't show much in the way of appreciation. 'Thank you for the pretty silver evening bag. I know I shall enjoy using it', takes hardly a moment longer to write, but comes across as much more sincere.

5. DO avoid mentioning anything negative. 'Most of my birthday presents were disappointing, but the scarf you sent me was nice,' doesn't strike the right tone of gratitude. And if you're in the difficult position of having to write a thank you note for a gift that you don't like (or that is a duplicate of something you already have) **DO** try to focus your appreciation on the positives while keeping things slightly abstract: 'It was so thoughtful of you to select [title of book] for me. I'm sure you know how much I enjoy relaxing with a good novel'.

6. DON'T be too anxious about trying to sound sincere or find the perfect wording or phrase. There need be nothing complicated or difficult about writing a thank you note – see our examples and templates, all free for you to use, copy and personalize.

7. DO by all means plan and choose your thank you cards in advance of an event or occasion, but whatever you do – **DON'T** pre-write them. A non-personalized thank you note that makes no mention of the specific gift or favor received will tend to make a worse impression than failing to send a card at all! On a similar note, for goodness sake **DON'T** be tempted to ask your guests (for example at a baby shower or a bridal shower) to address their own envelope for your thank you note. It's not classy, and risks causing offence to those who have generously given you gifts.

8. DO double (or even triple!) check your spelling and grammar. In this era of computer spell checks it's easier than ever to make – and fail to notice – errors when writing by hand. A single spelling mistake can spoil the effect of your card or letter. Obviously you should take especial care with the recipient's name!

9. DO have a stock of thank you cards, note and letter paper on hand. If you first have to go out and buy supplies before you can write your thank you note, then the odds are it will never get done. To make things really easy, consider putting together a gratitude folder to keep cards, paper and envelopes, stamps etc. organized and ready to use.

10. DO take the time to send thank you notes to people who don't necessarily expect them (the staff at your favorite restaurant, the mechanic who fixed your car, ... your parents!). You'll make their day!