



How to Say Thank You

“Thank you!”—these are welcome words to all of us. A thank you communicates that we are valued and appreciated. Not receiving a thank you suggests that we are taken for granted. That is why an expression of thanks can make all the difference in a business relationship.

Luckily, thank you notes are among the easiest messages to write, especially when you follow these tips and suggestions.

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1. Know when to write.

You have an opportunity to say thank you anytime someone has:

- Delivered particularly good service.
- Gone beyond the job requirements for you.
- Been especially thoughtful, prompt, or efficient.
- Given you an opportunity (an interview, a referral, etc.).
- Given you a gift or treated you to a meal.
- Been a special pleasure to work with.
- Consistently met or exceeded expectations.

In classes, people often ask about writing just the two words “Thank you” in an email when they receive routine service from someone. I vote no. When someone completes a simple task that is part of the job, a thank you becomes just another email to delete.

Example: If someone forwards you a routine report from her manager, do not email a thank you. But if she forwards a useful link about an area of interest to you, write something like this: “Gayle, I appreciate this link. It looks as though the site has some excellent information I can use in my presentation. Thanks for thinking of me.”

2. Write promptly.

Although a sincere thank you is welcome anytime, writing promptly makes the writing easier because the details are fresh in your mind. In the message below, Jaime refers to specific details he might forget in a few days:

Dear Suneetha,

Thank you for all your work on today’s web conference. It could not have happened without you.

Through your planning, the program went beautifully. I appreciate the tactful way you handled my problem with the microphone. Also, your transition between the segments was very smooth. Your attention to detail and high standards were evident throughout the program.

Because of your efforts, Suneetha, we presented a professional image to potential clients. I am very grateful for your work on this event.

Best regards,

Jaime

3. Say thank you sincerely and specifically.

Jaime named specific things he is grateful for. That kind of thank you has much more power than an empty “Good job. Thanks.” He also noted that Suneetha’s efforts helped to convey a professional image to potential clients. Whenever possible, it’s wise to mention the positive effect of the person’s contribution.

4. Say thanks graciously—without a hint of negativity.

Do not mention anything that will detract from your theme of appreciation. For example, if you are thanking someone for heroic efforts in making travel arrangements for you, do not mention that your trip has been cancelled. Just say thank you.



5. Say thank you warmly.

Always use the other person's name and the personal pronouns *I* and *we*. For instance, write "We appreciate your artistry"—not "Your artistry is appreciated."

6. Choose the right format—email, letter, note, or card.

Features of email:

- Is right for someone who is regularly on a computer.
- Does not stand out as special or individual.
- Is perceived as informal.
- Is quick to write, send, and forward.
- Can be any length, from one or two sentences to several paragraphs.

Features of a typed letter or memo:

- Is suitable to acknowledge a donation or contribution of money or goods.
- Fits well to thank someone for significant help or great customer service.
- Is right when the thank you may end up in a personnel file.
- Must be at least two paragraphs.

Features of a handwritten card or note:

- Communicates a personal touch.
- Is a perfect response to a meal, flowers, gift, or personal help.
- Is short, typically from two sentences to two paragraphs.

7. Match the effort to the reason for the thank you.

A thank you that doesn't match the situation can be worse than no thank you at all. For instance, a two-word thank you is cruel in response to a 10-page report. A two-sentence thank you is stingy to a person who spent two weekends completing an inventory. On the other hand, two paragraphs of thanks are excessive to someone who provided a quick lift to the subway.

8. Say thank you without saying please.

When you say thanks, do not ask for anything. Asking detracts from your thank you and suggests that gratitude is not the real reason for your message.

9. Say thank you in your own voice.

Write thank yous that sound like you—not like something out of an etiquette book. Tell your own story. Use your own language.

Compare these openings, each in a different voice:

Dear Tim,

Thank you for Palmer's book. It is a beautiful volume, and I am pleased that you thought of it for me.

Tim, wow! "Let Your Life Speak" is brilliant. Thanks a bunch for passing it my way.

Dear Tim,

When I think of you, the word "thoughtful" comes quickly to mind. You have been so thoughtful over the years, and once again you have chosen a perfect book for me.

10. Let gratitude multiply and spread.

When you thank someone for excellent work on the job, send a copy to his or her supervisor and to the personnel department. When you thank a supervisor, mention the group, like this: "I appreciate the commitment your entire team showed in getting this project out on time." The supervisor can post your note or forward it to the group and may add his or her own thanks to yours.

Now it's your turn. Send an email, jot a note, write a card. Be grateful and show it. Make someone feel valued.

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