

Thank You Notes

Your step-by-step instructions for penning the perfect card

Step One: The Basics

To whom do I to send thank you notes?

Anyone who went out of his/her way to help you – she may have made a donation to your group or invited you into her home, etc. Even an action on your behalf, like allowing you to visit a workplace or putting in a good word for you, may warrant a thank you note.

Why I need to send a thank you note?

It recognizes the recipient while also showing your own generosity and maturity. Someone has been kind toward you – return the favor in this personal and thoughtful way.

Step Two: The Supplies

Black or blue pen (absolutely no brightly colored inks!)

Thank you card and envelope

Postal stamp

Address of recipient

Note: Write only on the bottom half of the inside of the card (below the crease)

Step Three: Addressing the envelope

Use the recipient's correct title on the envelope as well as in the salutation (see Step Four)

Include your return address!

Your Name

123 Main Street

Stillwater, OK 74075

Stamp

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Title Jane Jones

Company/Institution Name if Applicable

111 North Broadway

Oklahoma City, OK 12345

Step Four: The Salutation

The salutation is the greeting line of a letter or card; it generally begins with “Dear Mr. X.” The formality level of the salutation depends on your relationship to the person to whom you are sending the note. If the recipient is your sister, you can use her first name. If it is an elder or a person in a position of authority or respect, then use Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr./Senator/etc. *If in doubt, err on the side being too formal.*

Use a “,” after the salutation for a less formal relationship

Use a “:” after the salutation for a formal relationship

Dear Name, or :*	Date
Sincerely,	
Your Name	

Step Five: The Body of the Note

Grammar:

Contractions (like you’d, we’re, can’t) are informal so if you are writing a note to someone in a position of authority or of importance, do not use contractions.

Do not start two sentences in a row with “I”. The thank you note is for the benefit of its recipient and should not focus on the author.

Watch out for homophones and homonyms; affect vs. effect, bare vs. bear, compliment vs. complement, capital vs. capitol etc. Know which one is correct. Be careful to not overuse “so” and “very.” Thank you notes are usually short, so repetition is highly noticeable. Get creative with your words and spice it up a bit!

The following words may confuse many thank you note writers:

- 👉 alot vs. a lot vs. allot: **Alot** is not a word at all, so do not use it. **A lot** mean “a large number.” **Allot** means to “parcel out.”
- 👉 affect vs. effect: **Affect** most commonly means something like “to influence” or “to change” and is a *verb*. For example, “The rain **affected** Karen’s plans.” **Effect**, which is a *noun*, has several subtle meanings but the most common is “a result”. For instance, “The rain had no **effect** on Bob’s plans.”
- 👉 Assure vs. ensure vs. insure: **Assure** is the only one of the three words that means “to reassure someone or to promise.” For example, “I **assure** you that the chocolate is fresh.” **Ensure** chiefly means, “to make certain or to guarantee.” “He must **ensure** that the chocolate is indeed fresh.” Lastly, **insure** can be interchangeable with ensure in some cases, but it is easiest to keep these words straight by reserving insure for references to insurance. “I need to **insure** my car.”
- 👉 further vs. farther: You use **farther** to talk about physical distance and **further** to talk about metaphorical or figurative distance. For example, “How much **farther** is it to the next town?” and “I’m **further** along in my book than you are in yours.”
- 👉 good vs. well: It’s wrong to use **good** as an adverb after an action verb. For example, you would say “He ran **well**” instead of “He ran **good**”. If someone asks you how you are doing it is perfectly fine to say “I am good” or “I am well” - choose whichever you prefer.
- 👉 into vs. in to: Here is an example with explanation. “He walked **into** the room.” (Which direction was he going? Into the room.) “We broke **in to** the room.” (“Broke in” is a phrasal verb. What did you break in to? The room.)
- 👉 it’s vs. its: **It’s** with an apostrophe always means “it is” or “it has.” **Its** is the possessive form of it. For example, “**It’s** lunch time” and “The tree needs **its** branches trimmed.”

- 👉 may vs. might: The difference between may and might is subtle. If something is likely to happen, use **may**: “Sue **may** come over later.” If something is a stretch, use **might**: “Billy **might** win the lottery.”
- 👉 then vs. than: **Then** has an element of time. It can mean “next” or “at that time” For example, “We ate, **then** we went to the mall.” **Than** conveys a comparison, “DVDs are more expensive **than** video cassettes.
- 👉 your vs. you’re: **Your** is the possessive form of you. “Are these **your** shoes?” **You’re** is a contraction of two words: you are. “You’re going to do well on your test tomorrow.”
- 👉 who vs. whom: You use **who** when you are referring to the subject of a clause and **whom** when you are referring to the object of a clause. “**Who** loves you?” The one you are asking about in this sentence is the subject, so you use who. If you are asking “**Whom** do you love?” the answer to that question is the object of the sentence so you use whom.

Good Words to Use

Admire	Appreciate	Benefactor
Compliment	Delighted	Enjoyed
Favorite	Flattered	Generous
Gracious	Grateful	Happy
Hospitable	Impressed	Indebted
Kindness	Large-hearted	Lovely
Memorable	One-of-a-kind	Overjoyed
Overwhelmed	Perfect	Pleased
Remarkable	Satisfying	Sensational
Special	Superb	Thoughtful
Thrilled	Treasure	Valuable
Contribution	Commendable	Stunned
Refreshing	Thankful	Honored

Good Phrases to Use

Am pleased/grateful	An excellent idea	Appreciate this opportunity
As a token of our gratitude	Convey my personal thanks to	Deeply appreciate
Deep sense of gratitude	Delighted in	Enjoyed it/ourselves enormously
Made us feel so welcome	Generous gift	Greatly affected by
Heartfelt thanks	I appreciated	I cannot thank you enough
I plan to use it for/to	It was a great pleasure	It was extremely kind of you
I will never forget	I wish to express my sincere	Know that I am grateful for
Many thanks	Most sincerely grateful for	My personal thanks
Please accept my gratitude	Quite out of the ordinary	Show my appreciation
Very thoughtful of you	We are so thankful for	We were especially pleased
What a joy to receive	Your kindness/generosity	Your very generous gift
Your efforts made this possible	Thanks again	Honored by

Step Six: Example of a Poor (but Funny) Thank You Note

Mr. Smith,

Thanks so much for the money you gave to our club. We don't know what we'll do with it... You didn't give as much money as Mr. Johnson, but we appreciate it anyways!

Sincerely,

Billy

Why is this a poor thank you note?

1. It thanks Mr. Smith only for the monetary donation, and not the thoughtfulness behind it. Mr. Smith gave the money for some *reason*, which Billy failed to acknowledge.
2. The salutation is too informal – note the lack of any greeting like “Dear.”
3. Billy fails to tell Mr. Smith what the club will do with the money, or even what they plan to do with it (making the donation sound unwanted or unappreciated).
4. The word “anyways” is too casual/slangy for a thank you note.
5. Billy misspelled “Sincerely” in the closing. Avoid using words with unfamiliar meanings or spellings in your thank you notes.

Step Seven: A Good Thank You Note Template

Fill in the blanks within this template to collect your thoughts before writing a thank you note. Then, using the information you insert into this outline, write a flawless letter without fear!

Dear _____:

Thank you so much for your generous donation to the _____.

It was so _____ of you/ your organization to
_____. You have made a meaningful impact on
_____.

Your contribution to _____ is widely known and appreciated by

(Check all that apply)

_____ myself/many
_____ my parents
_____ my classmates
_____ the community

Your _____ will serve to remind us of your _____.
(Circle Two)

Generosity	Money	Thoughtfulness	School Spirit
Compassion	Fame	Kindness	

Please know how much your contribution is appreciated.

Gratefully,

Step Eight: Write your own thank you note

Materials for this handout taken from:

The Art of the Handwritten Note: A Guide to Reclaiming Civilized Communication by Margaret Shepherd. Broadway Books, New York City, New York.

How to Say It: Choice Words, Phrases, Sentences & Paragraphs for Every Situation by Rosalie Maggio. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliff, New Jersey.