

Thank
You!

Writing Workbook Series

© Student Handouts

Thank-You Notes

What are thank-you notes? Thank-you notes are the traditional way of expressing the receipt and appreciation of a gift. They are a critical part of good manners and proper etiquette.

The term *receipt* refers to receiving a gift. Imagine that Aunt Clara, living in Alabama, has mailed a gift to her nephew Peter, living in Colorado. Without a thank-you note, Aunt Clara has no way of knowing that Peter received her gift.

The term *appreciate* refers to the fact that the recipient (in this case, Peter) appreciates the gift. Much more than the gift itself, Peter appreciates the fact that Aunt Clara cares enough about Peter to send any sort of gift at all.

Why can't I just call or send an email or text?

The act of sending a gift requires physical effort. The response to this act should require some physical effort, as well. This means crafting a handwritten note.

What if I don't like my present?

Liking or disliking the actual present is irrelevant. You are thanking the person for the thoughtful gesture of providing a gift, not for the gift itself.

However, it is understood that there are times when some sort of negative commentary is necessary. For example, one might receive a sweater that does not fit. Look through the samples for examples of how to handle these situations.

What if I received money?

According to the rules of etiquette, referring directly to money is a faux pas (meaning, don't do it). You can say thank you for the gift, and mention what the cash gift will do for you, but you may not mention the actual money or amount of money.

What if I only received a card?

Remember—a thank-you note acknowledges the receipt and appreciation of a gift, including the gift of a card. Remember Aunt Clara and Peter? Perhaps Aunt Clara lives on a fixed income

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and cannot afford to send Peter a gift. For Aunt Clara, the cost of just a card and postage stamp is a big expense. Should Aunt Clara's thoughtful remembrance of Peter be ignored simply because Aunt Clara has little money? Of course not.

I get it, or at least, I think I get it...

Perhaps the best thing to do now will be to introduce some scenarios and examples of thank-you notes.

Example 1

Scenario: Aunt Clara sends Peter a simple card wishing him a happy birthday. The card contains no money.

Dear Aunt Clara,

Thank you so much for the lovely card. It was so kind of you to remember me on my birthday. It was a wonderful day. Mom and dad bought a cake and everyone sang. We all wish you could have been here. I hope that you are well in Alabama. I look forward to your next letter.

Love,

Peter

Example 2

Scenario: Aunt Clara sends Peter a card with ten dollars.

Dear Aunt Clara,

Thanks so much for the lovely card and gift. It was so kind of you to remember me on my birthday. Your generous gift is very much appreciated for my college fund.

Although we had a nice little party at the house, the whole family missed having you being here. We hope that you are well and look forward to hearing from you again soon.

Love,

Peter

Example 3

Scenario: Aunt Clara sends Peter a sweater that he absolutely hates.

Dear Aunt Clara,

Thanks so much for the thoughtful gift. It was very kind of you to remember me on my birthday.

Although we had a nice little party at the house, the whole family missed you being here. We hope that you are well and look forward to hearing from you again soon.

Love,

Peter

Example 4

Scenario: Aunt Clara sends Peter a sweater that Peter likes, but that is two sizes too small.

Dear Aunt Clara,

Thanks so much for the lovely gift. It was very kind of you to remember me on my birthday. Unfortunately, my healthy appetite has caused me to grow quite a bit since your last visit. Instead of a size 8, I am now a size 12. Hopefully I will be able to exchange the sweater at the store, if you will give me its name. Otherwise, we will donate it to charity, and some other lucky kid will get to wear my favorite color.

Although we had a nice little party at the house, the whole family missed you being here. We hope that you are well and look forward to hearing from you again soon.

Love,

Peter

Do you see the formula?

The formula for writing a thank-you note is very simple.

1. Acknowledge the gift.
2. Share some news about the occasion (such as the birthday).
3. Express interest in the giver.

Are you ready?

You should now be ready to attempt writing your own thank-you notes. Below are some scenarios. Craft a thank-you note to fit each scenario.

Assignment 1

Scenario: Your Uncle Leroy has sent you a set of encyclopedias that will help a lot with your education.

Assignment 4

Scenario: Your Aunt Marianne has sent you a handmade quilt featuring characters from a film you do not like.

Lined writing area consisting of 20 horizontal dashed lines for student response.

Don't I need expensive thank-you notes from a store?

You do not need to buy expensive thank-you notes from a store. Any nice stationery will do. Remember—just like the gifts you receive, it is the thought that counts, not the money spent.

When do I send a thank-you note?

You send a thank-you note every time that you receive a card or gift. This will include everything from birthdays, to baby showers, weddings, bar mitzvahs, first communions, etc. You send a thank-you note even if you received the gift in person and thanked the person on the spot.

Just remember...

You are thankful for the gesture more than you are thankful for the gift itself. Never openly complain about the gift, no matter how much you may hate it or how inappropriate it may be. Mail your handwritten thank-you notes as soon as possible so that the giver knows that his/her gift was received and appreciated.

Answer Key/Cheat Sheet

Assignment 1: This is an easy one! Simply follow the formula.

Assignment 2: Thank her for remembering your birthday. You do not need a detailed response to her information regarding her health ailments, but simply express your desire that she get better and let her know that she is in your thoughts.

Assignment 3: Your parent's coworker was very thoughtful, but it can feel awkward to write to a person you don't know. Simply follow the formula but, instead of saying this person was in your thoughts, you might express an interest in this person attending a future family function.

Assignment 4: Because this item was handmade, you cannot slyly hint about exchanging it. This is a situation where you simply have to say thank you and let it go. In the future, you might consider writing to your aunt more often so that she knows what your actual interests are.

Assignment 5: This is one of the rare situations when it is okay to acknowledge that you will never use the gift you have received. However, the rules of etiquette still apply—you cannot openly complain about the gift. You might simply say that, although you are very eager to practice knife-throwing using your younger sibling as a target, your parents don't approve, and have locked up the knives until you are an adult.