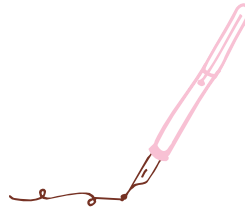


Thank You Notes: The Art of Being Grateful



From the Pen of...
Fontaine Maury

Never was there a better pair than Thank and You. Not Ham and Eggs, Ken and Barbie or Gin and Tonic, Peaches and Cream, Lucy and Ricky... "Thank you" is a phrase that is sweet, simple and to the point. We're often better at saying it in person, but it is after the fact that really counts. I can think of no instance when even a brief thank you note is not appropriate.

- * A thank you note should (ideally) be written within 5 days of receipt of the gift or favor. Never apologize if it is tardy, just make sure you write an especially well crafted letter.
- * It is tempting to substitute a phone call or e-mail for the hand written note, but my mantra is "a letter is better." You don't have to be Flannery O'Connor or Robert Frost to put together a well-written missive.
- * Have some notepaper on hand at all times. Your stationery need not be baroque in its elegance, nor does it need to say thank you on the front. If your stationery says thank you on the front it beats you to the punch. Paper personalized with your name or monogram is best as it is a direct reflection of your unique personality and impeccable taste.
- * Choose a pen that you like to write with and that complements your handwriting style. Mine looks awful if I write with a fine point, I use a felt tip. Do feel free to experiment with different colored inks, especially if your stationery is printed with a fun design.
- * Practice your handwriting and message on a plain piece of paper to perfect your sentiment, that way you'll conserve your special writing paper.
- * The best salutation for personal correspondence is "Dear" and the first name of the person to whom you are writing. A note to someone who is your senior, or not an intimate friend, may include his or her social title as in "Dear Mr. White." When writing couples, the woman's name always goes first: "Dear Aunt Jane and Uncle Gordon."
- * The length of your note is not important. Most significant are what you say and how you say it. The best thank yous come from the heart and say why you love the gift.
- * A conversational tone is friendly and will help the flow of your thoughts as you write. The use of extras like dashes, ellipses and underlinings will give an informal tone to your letter, but use them sparingly as they can be distracting.

Turn over for more tips...

- * Open your correspondence by calling attention to the gift or favor. Continue by saying something personal or noteworthy. Finish on an upbeat note

Dear Sara,

Who would have thought that such beautiful daisies are available in January? They look so pretty on the sideboard next to my grandmother's silver julep cups. I enjoyed visiting with you very much and look forward to seeing you again soon.

Love, Haile

- * Save the "emoticons" for e-mails only (you know, the sideways smiley face that peppers e-mails).
- * Do include a date so that if the recipient saves the note they will have a reference point. The date can either go on the top right or at the end of the note just after your signature.
- * Children should be taught to write thank you notes as soon as they learn to write. Although children's fill in the blank notes are popular, they should not be a substitute for an original note. Children will need help from you at first. Start by transcribing for the child a letter that they can sign. Soon enough, you'll be able to write a simple note that the child can copy. Later, when the child can write his own, you may well find that he writes an adorable note like this one.

Dear Aunt Maury,

Thank you for the flashlight, I have been using it to catch bugs at night.

Love, Parker

- * Close your note with your signature. Use both your first and last names to an acquaintance or just your first name to family and friends. For new brides, this may be the first chance you have to sign your new name, so indulge.
- * When more than one person is signing a letter, the writer's name comes last.
- * Once you get the hang of it, writing a thank you note will only take a few moments, but will bring the recipient an untold bounty of joy.