

The **power** of a thank-you note

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Everyone wants a competitive edge—whether they're looking for a new job, exploring new markets or just wanting more customers to buy their products or services. People are willing to pay hundreds, even thousands, of dollars to promote themselves or their businesses. Oftentimes, however, it is a small personal gesture that gives you the big business advantage.

For the price of a card and stamp and 15 minutes (or less) of your time, you could gain a huge advantage over your competition from a practice your grandmother tried to teach you years ago: "Write a thank you note, dear!" It's a simple courtesy, yet one that is often overlooked. And when you overlook the simple details, you may find yourself being overlooked as well.

Why send a note?

Among the many occasions to write a thank-you note (see "Write On" sidebar), one of the most important is immediately following a job interview. Because so few people take the time to send a thank-you note, doing so will set you apart. A well-written note:

- Expresses your appreciation for the employer's interest and time.
- Gives you an opportunity to reiterate your interest in the position.
- Gives you an opportunity to remind the employer about your qualifications or add something you forgot to mention.
- Allows you to provide any follow-up information requested by the employer.

Essential Do's and Don'ts

Whether you write or type a thank-you note:

- Make sure you get a business card (or have the necessary contact information) from everyone you met. You don't want to misspell a name.
- Be sure to send a note to everyone you met, from the receptionist to the hiring manager.
- Send a thank-you note within one or two days of the interview or meeting.
 - **Typed:** Most formal, always appropriate for business (If recipient is traveling or won't receive note in a timely manner, be sure to send an email thank-you note as well.)
 - **Handwritten:** A brief, handwritten note is more personal.
 - **Email:** Acceptable, if this is how the recipient likes to receive correspondence. Emailed thank-you notes can be sent first, followed by hand- or type-written notes.
- Use high-quality stationery or heavy card stock.
- Always check for typos and grammatical errors.
- The most important thing to remember about writing a thank-you note is to personalize it—make it specifically relate to the person and meeting.
- Make thank-you note writing easy. Have a box of personalized notecards on hand. Keep a sheet of stamps inside the box to make follow up fast and easy.

Write On

There are a myriad opportunities to send a thank-you note. As you start writing notes, you will discover more reasons to say thanks. Here is a list to get you started. Send a note:

- When someone offers to make an important connection for you.
- Following a job interview (Send a note to each person who interview you as well as the person who gave you the contact to begin with.).
- When colleagues or team members have done a good job.
- Following a meeting involving colleagues outside your department (Send a note to each member, thanking them for their participation. Email is acceptable.).
- When someone gives you a lead.
- When you want to thank or acknowledge current clients.
- When your customer gives you a referral.
- When you want to acknowledge members in your professional organizations.
- Following a networking event (Send a note to the people whose cards you collected.).

How to write a thank-you note

Use the “you-me-you” formula for the body of the note. Avoid a “cut and paste” message and be specific instead. While addressing the experience you had with the person, start with a “you” statement that puts all of the attention on the person to whom you are writing.

Example: “It was great meeting with you on Tuesday. I appreciate your taking the time to speak with me about your company’s mission and the possibility of working on your team.”

Follow that with something that shifts the attention to yourself or the “me” part of the letter. Here’s where you can reiterate anything you wanted them to remember or know about you which is perfect after a job interview.

Example: “I appreciate this opportunity to work together. I can bring to the table great communication skills that will be helpful in negotiations with your other team leaders.”

Bring the note to a close with another “you” statement that shifts the focus back to the recipient of your letter.

Example: “Once again, it was great speaking with you. If you have any further questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.”

If you’re writing a handwritten note and want to follow this formula in a more informal way, here’s an example:

You: *“I was great meeting you last night. I’m fascinated by your creative business model.”*

Me: *“I’d love the opportunity to take you to lunch and discuss the possibility of collaborating on your next PR project. I think my past experience could offer you some shortcuts.”*

You: *“I have a lot of respect for what you’ve done already and can’t wait to watch your progress. Your business really makes a difference to others.”*

When a great thank-you note has the power to make a positive impression on a prospective employer, new customer, existing customer, colleague or associate, you realize that small investment of time and money might be the very thing that leads to a big benefit.

Using proper form

If you choose to write a formal thank-you letter, unless you are using personal letterhead that includes your contact information, follow the rules of formatting shown below. Use block style and adjust spacing as appropriate, depending on the length of your letter.

Your name

Your address

City, State, zip

(2-4 spaces)

Date

(2-4 spaces)

Letter recipient

Recipient’s title

Recipient’s company name

Recipient’s (company) address

City, State, Zip

(2 spaces)

Dear (recipient’s name):

(1-2 spaces)

For the body of the letter, follow the “you-me-you” formula using no less than three sentences and at least two paragraphs. Create a single space between paragraphs. No indenting.

(1-2 spaces)

Sincerely,

(4 spaces where you sign your name)