



# Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet

Family and Consumer Sciences  
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## Being Courteous to the Gift Giver

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We have all received gifts on special occasions, such as birthdays and holidays, and have thanked the givers to ensure our appreciation for their gifts. Showing kindness to loved ones and friends should involve both a courteous verbal thank-you and a handwritten notice.

### The Importance of Thank-You Notes

Many parents consider writing thank-you notes an example of responsible and courteous behavior they want to teach their children. Most people like to receive mail, and teaching children to write thank-you notes can be part of helping them learn good social skills.

Young children can write thank-you notes to grandparents, aunts, uncles and other family member to acknowledge appreciation for gifts and kindnesses. Writing a thank-you note to family members who live far away may be an important part of showing them how important and loved they are.

Parents may also want to encourage their children to write thank-you notes to local community organizations and corporate sponsors who lent support to their activities.

The following suggestions may be helpful to parents who want to help their children learn to write thank-you notes:

- Take a positive approach. Briefly explain to your children that it will make the gift giver feel good to know that they appreciate the present. Tell them that you like to let others know you appreciate the things they do for you. The way you talk about thank-you notes will influence whether your children think of writing them as a chore or as something thoughtful they can do for someone who has done something for them.
- Make writing the thank-you note fun. Provide interesting and colorful paper and pens or pencils for your children to use. Suggest they decorate the paper using crayons, markers, rubber stamps, glitter and glue. Be creative together about fun ways to make the note look special. Consider taking pictures together of your child playing with the toy or wearing the clothing to include with the note.
- Giving your children choices. Provide an array of paper and writing utensils, for example, and let them select the ones they will use. Open-ended choices can be overwhelming for your children; instead of asking them, for example, when they want to do thank-you notes, ask them if they would like to do it right after dinner or before bedtime.

- Pick a good time do the thank-you notes. Do not begin them when your children are tired or hungry. Do not ask them to stop in the middle of a game. Pick a time when you can work together without feeling rushed.
- Keep any instructions you give your children short and simple. Young children may need concrete, step-by-step guidance-from, “Do you want to use the yellow or the green paper?” to “Now you can use the crayons to color the paper,” to “Now I’ll help you decide what words you want to say to and I’ll write them on the paper for you.” Older children may need fewer specific instructions, but may still need your support and guidance.
- Ask your children what they would like to say to the gift giver. It may help to suggest a phrase to start the note: “The teddy bear you sent me has a special place in my room.” Or, “I wore my new shoes to school and my friends really liked them.” The child could add a statement about where else he or she would wear the new shoes.
- Keep your expectations in line with the child’s developmental level. Children who are just learning to write, for example, will misspell words and form their letter imperfectly. Young children who cannot yet write for themselves will probably express their thoughts in brief and simple ways, such as “I like the teddy.”
- Focus on helping your children understand the idea of thanking other and on the effort they pu7t into doing a thank-you note. Do not worry about having a long or perfect-looking final product.
- Writing thank-you notes is a habit, and habits are not leaned overnight. Expect to encourage and support your child’s writing thank-you notes for a long time before they are ready to do so independently.
- Write thank you notes yourself! Children learn to be courteous and responsible by watching their parents.

There are no specific rules to follow; make the handwritten note a special message from the heart to the giver. A purchased thank-you note can be used if it also includes a personal message of thanks.

As children get older, parents may wish to introduce more formal guidelines for thank-you notes such as the following:

- Include a date and send the thank-you note as soon as possible after receiving the gift. I recently attended a wedding shower and within 48 hours received a thank-you note in the mail. I remember feeling good that the bride-to-be acknowledged my gift so promptly. Her note was very nicely written to express her enthusiasm for my gift and her pleasure that I had attended her special event.
- I also received a thank-you note three months after a wedding. I had given a cash gift and felt somewhat uneasy about the lack of response. When the note finally arrived, I was relieved that the bride and groom had received the gift and purchased something for their new home.
- Begin the note with an appropriate salutation, such as “Dear” or more casual greeting, such as “Hi, Sue” or “Thanks, George”.

- Express your thanks sincerely. Use your own words to make your note sound warm and friendly. Always acknowledge the specific gift and how or where you plan to use it.
- Sometimes a gift will not be useful, remember, “It’s the thought that counts.” Express your thanks to the giver for their thoughtfulness, energy, and time spent in choosing the gift.
- End with an appropriate closing, such as, “Thoughtfully,” “Thanks again,” “Fondly,” “Love,” or “Best Regards.” Sign your name.

## References

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Griffin, S.F. Writing thank-you notes. *Help-a-Saurus*. New Brunswick; N.J.:Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

Thanks: Tips for writing a special thank-you note. Hallmark

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