



Correspondence Bites

The Communication Situation

Why do people write thank-you notes?

In many cultures, saying **"thank you"** in person or over the phone is enough. In the United States and many other English-speaking countries, however, people often write a thank-you note or email after receiving a gift, kindness, favor, or opportunity. A written thank-you shows appreciation, thoughtfulness, and respect. It also helps strengthen personal and professional relationships.

When do people write thank-you notes?

People write thank-you notes after many different situations.

Personal

- receiving a birthday or wedding gift
- being invited to someone's home
- attending a dinner party
- receiving help from a friend
- after a baby shower or bridal shower
- after someone does you a favor

Professional

- after a job interview
- after receiving a recommendation
- after someone gives career advice
- after networking events
- after receiving professional assistance
- after a business meeting



Academic

- thanking a professor for writing a recommendation letter
- thanking a teacher for extra help
- thanking a mentor
- thanking someone who supervised your research
- thanking a guest speaker

Why are thank-you notes important?

A thank-you note does more than express gratitude.

It tells the other person:

- I appreciate your time.
- I noticed your kindness.
- I don't take your help for granted.
- I value our relationship.

Sometimes a short thank-you note can leave a stronger impression than an expensive gift.

Is a thank-you note always necessary?

Not every situation requires one.

If a cashier hands you your receipt, saying "Thank you" is enough.

However, when someone spends their **time**, **effort**, or **resources** to help you, a written thank-you is often appreciated.

A Cultural Note

Many newcomers are surprised by how often Americans send thank-you notes.

For example, people commonly write them:

- after a job interview
- after staying at someone's home
- after receiving a gift
- after someone writes a recommendation letter

These notes are usually brief. They are not a formality or an obligation—they are a way of showing appreciation and maintaining positive relationships.

Now let's learn how to write a thank-you note that sounds sincere, natural, and appropriate for the situation.

