How to Write a Thank-You Note People Keep

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A practical 32-step guide to a note worth keeping: get clear about what you are thanking someone for, choose a form and a moment, write in four plain parts, make it sound like you, and send it without turning it into an obligation.

Be Clear About What You Are Thanking For

1. **Write down exactly what the person did**
   Write down exactly what the person did.
2. **Note what it cost them, if you know**
   Note what it cost them, if you know.
3. **Write one line on what changed for you**
   Write one line on what changed for you.
4. **Leave out requests, hints and updates about yourself**
   Leave out requests, hints and updates about yourself.
5. **Do not use it to settle an awkward situation**
   Do not use it to settle an awkward situation.
6. **Drop the obligation as a reason for writing**
   Drop the obligation as a reason for writing.

Choose the Form and the Moment

7. **Use the channel you normally use with this person**
   Use the channel you normally use with this person.
8. **Choose a card you can actually write on**
   Choose a card you can actually write on.
9. **Consider whether a gift is involved, and say so plainly**
   Consider whether a gift is involved, and say so plainly.
10. **Jot the three lines from step 1 before you forget them**
    Jot the three lines from step 1 before you forget them.
11. **Give yourself ten quiet minutes, not a perfect evening**
    Give yourself ten quiet minutes, not a perfect evening.
12. **Write it before you start repaying the favour**
    Write it before you start repaying the favour.

Write the Note in Four Parts

13. **Open with the thanks and the specific thing**
    Open with the thanks and the specific thing.
14. **Add one sentence on the effort you noticed**
    Add one sentence on the effort you noticed.

15. **Say what difference it made**

    Say what difference it made.

16. **End with a warm, unpressured line**

    End with a warm, unpressured line.

17. **Read it aloud once to catch the tone**

    Read it aloud once to catch the tone.

18. **Check the name, the detail and one spelling**

    Check the name, the detail and one spelling.

19. **Stop at four or five sentences**

    Stop at four or five sentences.

Make It Sound Like You

20. **Cut 'words cannot express' and similar openers**

    Cut 'words cannot express' and similar openers.

21. **Use the words you would actually say to them**

    Use the words you would actually say to them.

22. **Allow one small, shared detail**

    Allow one small, shared detail.

23. **Match the weight of the words to the gesture**

    Match the weight of the words to the gesture.

24. **Do not apologise for the note itself**

    Do not apologise for the note itself.

25. **Keep any mention of a gift modest and truthful**

    Keep any mention of a gift modest and truthful.

26. **Write it in your own hand when you can**

    Write it in your own hand when you can.

Send It and Let It Go

27. **Address it and put it where you will take it**

    Address it and put it where you will take it.

28. **Send the message version without a second reread**

    Send the message version without a second reread.

29. **Do not follow up to ask whether it arrived**

    Do not follow up to ask whether it arrived.

30. **Keep a few blank cards and stamps together**

    Keep a few blank cards and stamps together.

31. **Notice one specific thing each week worth thanking**

    Notice one specific thing each week worth thanking.

32. **Let the occasional note be short and imperfect**

    Let the occasional note be short and imperfect.

Sources

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