

GIVING THANKS

Celebrate the season year-round by acknowledging what you're grateful for.

It's Thanksgiving afternoon. You've had turkey, stuffing, potatoes, cranberries—all the fixings. You've had pie (both apple and pumpkin). And right about now you're thankful you're wearing pants with an elastic waist. It's time to watch another game or perhaps figure out which sales to hit with the start of the holiday shopping tomorrow. But isn't there something more to this holiday? Thanksgiving is the perfect opportunity to slow down and take stock of what's really important in your life. So before the meal, or right after, while everyone is still seated at the table, invite each family member, friend and guest to state something they're thankful for. Pay special attention to the responses of the very young—their honesty may prove to be very enlightening. Gratitude can help you stop taking your life for granted. It can free you from petty annoyances and inspire you to think of other people. So why just limit gratitude to Thanksgiving? Here are a couple of suggestions to keep the good thoughts flowing throughout all the holidays and into the upcoming year.

Facts related to Thanksgiving*

- **265 million** – The preliminary estimate of turkeys raised in the United States in 2006. That's up 3% from 2005. The turkeys produced in 2005 together weighed 7.2 billion pounds.
- **664 million pounds** – The forecast for U.S. cranberry production in 2006, up 6 percent from 2005. Wisconsin is expected to lead all states in the production of cranberries, with 375 million pounds, followed by Massachusetts (175 million). New Jersey, Oregon and Washington are also expected to have substantial production, ranging from 16 million to 49 million pounds
- **13.4 pounds** – The quantity of turkey consumed by the typical American in 2004, with a hearty helping devoured at Thanksgiving time. Per capita sweet potato consumption was 4.7 pounds.
- **68,000 tons** – The 2006 contracted production of snap (green) beans for processing. Of this total, Wisconsin led all states (305,000 tons). Many Americans consider green bean casserole a traditional Thanksgiving dish.

*Online resource: www.usa.gov



Accept, acknowledge, appreciate.

Try to remember the Three A's: Accept, Acknowledge and Appreciate. They should replace the Three C's: Complaining, Condemning and Criticizing. The Three A's will get you much farther in developing positive relationships with co-workers, friends and family members.

Do something for someone else.

Yes, you've heard it before: it is better to give than to receive. One of the greatest rewards in helping others is the uplifted feeling you get while doing something philanthropic. If you aren't ready for any long-term volunteer commitments, it's possible to make a difference in hourly increments. Offer to deliver meals during lunch for Meals on Wheels. Help serve dinner for the homeless, volunteer at the animal shelter, or send care packages and write letters of gratitude to the U.S. Military*. The rewards will be immeasurable.

Put it all in perspective.

It's often easy to lose perspective on exactly how much we do have. It's easy to feel less than satisfied with your lot in life as you watch your neighbors drive up in a new car, install a new gourmet kitchen or jet off on an exotic vacation. These expenses don't always equate to happiness. Remember, what you have is always greater than what you need.

Focus on the positive.

Keeping a positive outlook on life will change your entire perspective, as people have a tendency to remember the bad things as vividly as the good. One way to solve this problem is to keep a gratitude journal that differs from a traditional journal by only containing positive entries. Also, try to remember what good things came out of a seemingly bad event, such as a difficult experience that brought you and a friend closer. Another exercise is to make a list of all the people that have had a positive effect on your life. You quickly realize how much good happens from nearly everyone you spend time with.



HOW MANY WAYS ARE THERE TO SAY THANK YOU?

There are many simple ways to show a token of your gratitude to your family, friends and co-workers.

- Bring donuts or bagels.
- Praise your colleague to their boss.
- Bake cookies.
- Send flowers.
- Send a card.
- Make an unexpected phone call.
- Give movie tickets.

THE ART OF THE THANK-YOU NOTE.

In this age of email, voicemail and instant messaging, the handwritten thank-you note has been all but forgotten. But it is still one of the very best ways to say thank you—whether for a dinner, special gift or kind word. And in the business world, the written thank-you note is truly a way to stand out. So how do you write a thank-you note?

1. Be prepared. Keep a supply of simple note cards on hand. Then you're ready to jot down a note. The small size of the card lets you be quick and concise.
2. Think beyond the note. You can write a thank-you message on postcards or on the back of photos.
3. Keep it simple. Say thank you; mention the item and what you'll use it for, or if the note is an acknowledgement of someone's efforts, mention what you really appreciate about the other person. Allude to the future (i.e., we'll look forward to seeing you again soon). And then simply sign off.
4. Mum's the word on money. If you received a gift of money, simply thank the giver for "their generosity."

SHOWING GRATITUDE. TIPS ON TIPPING.

The holidays are the perfect opportunity to remember those who serve you regularly. The easiest way to give a tip is within a holiday card or small gift. And of course, it's nice to give your gift during the month of December to say thanks for a year of great service.

- Housekeeper: one week's pay.
- Gardener: \$20-50.
- Apartment building handyman: \$15-40 each.
- Apartment building elevator operators: \$15-40 each.
- Newspaper carrier (daily delivery): \$25-50.
- Teacher: \$25-100; a gift certificate to a bookstore or office supply store.
- Your children's piano teacher, coach or ballet instructor: a small gift from your child.
- Babysitter: one night's pay, plus a small gift from your child.
- Full-time nanny: one week's to one month's pay based on tenure, plus a small gift from your child.
- Au pair: one week's pay, plus a small gift from your child.
- Day care service: \$25-70, plus a small gift from your child.
- Parking attendants: \$10-20 each.
- Manicurist/pedicurist: \$15 or more.
- Hairdresser/stylist: \$15 or more; Shampoo: \$10.