

# How to write an appropriate thank-you letter

Congratulations! We, and the donors who fund these awards, are excited to recognize your hard work. You will want to let those who donate to create these awards know how much it means to you with a thank-you letter.

Once department communications receives all thank you letters, each donor will receive a packet with all communication related to their award. Please do **not** mail your letter directly to the donor.

**NOTE:** Letters with inappropriate content, significant grammatical errors, or other issues will need to be revised. If you would like to submit your letter for pre-approval before printing, please email it to [connect@chem.wisc.edu](mailto:connect@chem.wisc.edu).

Here are some helpful tips:

- **Specify which award you won.**  
Some donors give numerous awards. In your opening paragraph, let them know what award you won by using the award's full official name, and thank them for being part of the UW-Madison Department of Chemistry's success.
- **Explain your goals and how the award will help you achieve them.**  
Donors want to know their gifts make a difference to you, to the department and to the advancement of science. Convey this message with a paragraph or two about what you hope to accomplish in the near future and throughout your career. Explain how the donor's generosity will help you achieve this. Also let them know you are excited to include this award in your Curriculum Vitae (CV). (*For more information on creating a CV, review this [guide from NIH](#).*)
- **Thank the donor for helping to change your life.**  
Though you may be able to proceed without the additional award or acknowledgement, donors hope that their funds change lives. If you are in need of financial assistance, and this is what you have earned, let the donor know that you would not be able to move forward without them. If you are not in need, still let the donor know that their contribution to your education and career helps you focus on your studies or research and alleviates a financial struggle.
- **Let the donor get to know you.**  
Donors want to know something about the person they help. If you are comfortable doing so, tell them where you are from, any obstacles you overcame to get to where you are and why you have chosen to follow the career path you are on. Share information about other awards you have received, your volunteer experiences, community service, or extracurricular activities.

Technical details:

- Write your letter on a high-quality personal note card, or 8.5" x 11" linen resume paper.
- Type with 12-14 point text or use legible handwriting. Some people do not see clearly.
- Include proper business letter addresses at the top. **SEE EXAMPLE BUSINESS LETTER, NEXT PAGE**
  - Address your thank-you letter to:  
Professor James Y. Tong  
22 Jacobs Dr.  
Athens, OH 45701

- A one-page letter is sufficient.
- Begin with a formal salutation and title. Use Mr. and Ms. or a company / foundation name). If you do not know to whom you should address the letter, contact the Department of Chemistry communications specialist at [connect@chem.wisc.edu](mailto:connect@chem.wisc.edu).
- If you choose to include a photo, use one in which you are volunteering, conducting research, studying or otherwise participating in activities you have discussed in your letter.
- For two or more donors who live in separate households, address a thank-you letter to each.
- Always spellcheck your letter and have a friend or family member read it to catch mistakes.
- Sign your letter.
- Submit your letter in an envelope to the Department of Chemistry communications specialist's box in the mail room.
- Send questions to the Department of Chemistry communications specialist at [connect@chem.wisc.edu](mailto:connect@chem.wisc.edu).

This example letter is from the Purdue Owl online writing center (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/2/>)

123 Winner's Road  
New Employee Town, PA 12345

March 16, 2001

Ernie English  
1234 Writing Lab Lane  
Write City, IN 12345

Dear Mr. English:

The first paragraph of a typical business letter is used to state the main point of the letter. Begin with a friendly opening; then quickly transition into the purpose of your letter. Use a couple of sentences to explain the purpose, but do not go in to detail until the next paragraph.

Beginning with the second paragraph, state the supporting details to justify your purpose. These may take the form of background information, statistics or first-hand accounts. A few short paragraphs within the body of the letter should be enough to support your reasoning.

Finally, in the closing paragraph, briefly restate your purpose and why it is important. If the purpose of your letter is employment related, consider ending your letter with your contact information. However, if the purpose is informational, think about closing with gratitude for the reader's time.

Sincerely,

Lucy Letter