

By ANNE DONNELL

I know you've written about thank-you notes, probably more than once, but do you mind "cruising" through it again? I hope that graduates and brides and grooms will read this and start writing their thanks. □ -A Rather Generous Person

Too often one has to be generous, even when the notes have arrived in one's mailbox. These graduates and brides and grooms, as our QP of T (Question Person of Today) phrases it, seem to feel that what worked in the third grade (contents, form, and general appearance as in smudges and numerous erasures, misspelled words, and worse) works all life long.

And, yes, I agree that grooms should be on the list of those who write thank-you notes. Often the gifts come from those with close ties to the groom and perhaps no ties to the bride. So the groom can take pen in hand as I hope he would have done for graduation gifts (and birthday).

The thank-you letter following a job interview could well turn out to have more impact on the writer's future, but thank-you notes ought not to be written with the undertone of what benefits the writer most. Gratitude is the desired tone.

When writing to thank the person you hope will be your next boss, use an informal business style, looking online or in the library to check anything you doubt. There are templates online and in books. Check spelling and punctuation carefully. Spell Check could miss your using to when too is needed. Keep the letter short out of respect for the recipient's time, but don't be so brief you've boiled it all down to one sentence. This is serious so don't bank on charm.

Thank-you notes for gifts also need to be kept to a short page. More than one paragraph, the note needs to identify clearly the gift (not the amount of money, though – that seems rather grasping) or kindness demanding your grateful, written response.

The use to which you're putting the gift can often be included ("John exclaimed when he saw

the coffee grinder you gave us, ‘How did they know we love coffee so much?’”) as well as mention of your ties, if any, to the giver. (“I remember all those summers when the gang of us seemed to live in your backyard.”) It’s good to include a little reminder of the exact occasion for the gift as some people give many, many gifts, especially in the spring and summer graduation/wedding season.

Thank-you notes must also be written for gifts and kindnesses during the sad time of a death in the family. Note cards imprinted with the name of the deceased are helpful to the sender and the recipient, and sometimes are sent without additional comment. Not the best idea, but understanding must be extended to the bereaved. Friends can step in and assist in note writing. I think the biggest rule to keep in mind is that the bereaved must be allowed the freedom to behave as they wish as long as they wish.

I slipped the word birthday in the second paragraph because birthday gifts require thank-you notes. An e-mail note is just too easy a way to extend thanks, although I’ve been guilty, and there is some defense of this. The effort put into the gift deserves effort from the recipient.

How much time between receiving the gift and sending the note? As little as possible, but the passing of time is not an excuse not to send. No one expects the bride to write 700 notes in the month left before the wedding, but everyone expects those notes to be written sometime. Well, maybe the bride doesn’t, but her new mother-in-law does. (Don’t I need a grim smiley face here?)

Now please remember, any friends of mine reading this and smarting from the pain of my not sending YOU a thank-you note, old people forget. The cloud of forgetting, coupled with all those new things we have to learn like how to dial the latest phone, just jumbles us all up into the fluffly, delightful, crabby old things we are. (So what kind of smiley face should go here?)

One of the important reasons for thank-you notes is the sender needs to know the gift arrived, and that includes local gifts delivered by merchants.

The most important reason is gratitude. Greedy pigs masquerading as people need not apply.

ONLINE DEPARTMENT "Spread the Stupidity" (Thanks, J.W.) □ Only in North America do drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front. □ Only in North America do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and a diet coke. □ Only in North America do banks leave vault doors open and then chain the pens to the counters. □ Only in North America do we leave cars worth thousands of dollars in the driveway and put our useless junk in the garage. □ Only in North America do we buy hot dogs in packages of ten and buns in packages of eight. □ Only in North America do they have drive-up ATM machines with Braille lettering. □ EVER WONDER Why the sun lightens our hair, but darkens our skin? Why can't women put on mascara with their mouth closed? Why don't you ever see the headline 'Psychic Wins Lottery'? Why is 'abbreviated' such a long word? Why is it that doctors call what they do 'practice'? Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavor, and dishwashing liquid made with real lemons? Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker? Why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called rush hour? Why isn't there mouse-flavored cat food? Why didn't Noah swat those two mosquitoes? Why do they sterilize the needle for lethal injections? You know that indestructible black box that is used on airplanes? Why don't they make the whole plane out of that stuff? Why don't sheep shrink when it rains? Why are they called apartments when they are all stuck together? If con is the opposite of pro, is Congress the opposite of progress? If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport the terminal?

BW hiemal – wintry. The first day of June this year made a big try at this, but then the real June shoved in and took over. Always a rather warm lady.