Career Central™ Advice

Interviews: Thank You

"No one who achieves success does so without the help of others." — Alfred North Whitehead

Gratitude is the best attitude for success.

If you think the interview process ends with the handshake at the end of the meeting, think again! Despite your good credentials, possibly even a great interview, a follow up thank you (or lack thereof) can still make or break the deal.

Why? Because the primary purpose of a thank you is to: 1) show your enthusiasm and interest in the position; and 2) acknowledge the interviewer's time. The first keeps you in the forefront for consideration. The second shows you have good manners and character traits.

Until hired, your goal is to continue to differentiate yourself from the other candidates. A thank you is another opportunity to make a good impression.

Sign it. Seal it. Send it.

Be prompt. Send a thank you within 24, max 48, hours of the interview. Employers notice because promptness demonstrates enthusiasm, interest, and attention to detail — all desirable qualities in a potential employee. A late thank you won't have the same impact, but is still better than none; you never know whose path you'll cross again.

Keep it brief. Don't rehash the interview, and no witty repartee. Be respectful, confirm your interest, remind the recruiter of your qualifications, sum up what you gained from the meeting, and thank the interviewer for taking time out of their schedule.

PROOF! Check spelling and grammar just as you did for your cover letter and résumé. Get the names and titles right: Is it "Smith" or "Smyth," "Rodriguez" or "Rodrigues"? Call or check the company Web site if you're unsure. Keep the format easy to read, the paragraphs short and to the point. Overall it should look professional, be clear, and sound sincere.

Remember, a thank you is the most valuable personal expression you can give.

Thank the Academy

Thank everyone who helped in the interview process: The contact who gave you the lead or introduction; the assistant who took extra steps on your behalf; each and every interviewer you met with. Multiple thank yous may seem like a lot of work, but it's a small price to pay for a JOB!!

Address each note individually. Similar language in each is fine; use your judgment. Thank those who conducted a phone interview: He/she took the time; so should you.

And send a thank you even if you've accepted another position; it's only courteous.

Type it? Write it?

There are two schools of thought: Interview thank yous are a form of business, not personal, communication. Therefore, one school believes it should be typed, not handwritten. The other school believes the latter provides a more personal expression. Both are effective. The solution: It depends on the company and situation, and may be a judgment call.

Email? Snail Mail?

Again, two schools of thought.

Email is faster and more convenient; a faster response/receipt can keep you ahead of the competition. Email can be perfectly acceptable for technology companies or casual environments. However, quality stationery matching your cover letter and résumé is more formal and demonstrates extra effort.

Don't fax your thank you. It lacks both professional polish and a personal touch. Plus, it looks blurry, especially if the recipient's toner is running out.

In the end, use judgment; tailor your note to the recipient. Or ask your career counselor. Regardless of the medium, take time to craft an effective reply. In an age of speed and technology, an old-fashion thank you is never obsolete.

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In a nutshell:

A thank you note is a MUST, and may well be the last impression you give:

- **Send within 24 to 48 hours following the interview**
- **Use quality stationery that matches your cover letter and résumé, a formal printed thank you note, or a well-formatted email**
- **Use black or blue ink only; no pencil or other colored ink**
- **Include your full contact info**
- **Keep it short, simple, and sincere**
- **PROOF for names, spelling, and grammar**
- **No gifts; a well written thank you note is enough**

A thank you note validates you as a thoughtful and serious candidate.

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