

Gratitude Letter

Call to mind someone who did something for you for which you are extremely grateful but to whom you never expressed your deep gratitude. This could be a relative, friend, teacher, or colleague. Try to pick someone who is still alive and could meet you face-to-face in the next week.

Now, write a letter to one of these people using the following guidelines:

1. Write as though you are addressing this person directly (“Dear _____”)
2. Don’t worry about perfect grammar or spelling.
3. Describe in specific terms what this person did, why you are grateful to this person, and how this person’s behavior affected your life. Try to be as concrete as possible.
4. Describe what you are doing in your life now and how you often remember his or her efforts.
5. Try to keep your letter to roughly one page (~300 words).

After you finish writing the letter, keep a copy of it.

Next, plan a visit with the recipient, which will allow you deliver the letter in person. Let that person know you’d like to see him or her and have something special to share, but don’t reveal the exact purpose of the meeting.

If physical distance keeps you from making a visit, you may choose to arrange a phone call, video chat, or send them a video recording of you reading the letter.

Some general guidelines to keep in mind for the visit:

1. When you meet, let the person know that you are grateful to them and would like to read a letter expressing your gratitude; ask that he or she refrain from interrupting until you’re done.
2. Take your time reading the letter. While you read, pay attention to his or her reaction as well as your own.
3. After you have read the letter to the recipient, be receptive to his or her reaction and discuss your feelings together.
4. Remember to give the letter to the person before you leave.

