Why sending thank-you notes is important and meaningful
By Austin American-Statesman, adapted by Newsela staff
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610L

Sometimes your parents might ask you to write thank-you notes to people. You might not want to do it, though.

It actually might be a really good idea. Writing thank-you notes can make you feel good. It makes the person getting the note feel good, too.

Amit Kumar is a professor at the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas in Austin. He reminds us why thank-you notes and other acts of gratitude are good. Kumar worked with Nicholas Epley. He works at the University of Chicago in Illinois. They did several experiments on thank-you notes.

Kumar and Epley wanted to see why people hesitate to send thank-you notes. They also studied the reactions of people who receive the notes. Their study was recently published.

They saw that showing thankfulness helps people, Kumar says. It makes people feel good. Even so, "people don't seem to walk around giving thanks to people quite often," he says.

Spreading Good Feelings

Kumar and Epley asked students in business classes to write a letter of thanks to another person. Then they asked both the writer and the person receiving it about that letter. They asked how it made them feel. Most of the students sent the letter by email.

They found that writing the letter was a good experience for the writer. It improved their mood right afterward.

The writers did not think it would have much of an effect on the person getting their letter. They did not know how surprised the recipient would feel. They did not know how much it would improve that person’s mood. The writers thought it would be awkward for someone to get a letter of thanks. However, that was not the case.
The letter writers worried about what to say and how to say it. However, Kumar says, the recipients did not care much about whether writers got the wording right.

Those who got letters felt really good, he says. "They don't really feel awkward at all."

**Small Things Can Make A Big Impact**

The writers were worried. They wondered things like, "Am I going to find the right words?"

"When you are a recipient, you focus on the warmth," Kumar says. The recipients considered the feelings in the letters, he says. "How heartfelt was it? How friendly and warm?"

The writers were concerned, though. They wanted to make sure their writing was correct.

People don't always realize that thank-you notes make others feel good. If they knew, things might change, Kumar says. "They would do it more often," he says.

Kumar says this study is a good reminder. It shows that small things can have an effect, he says. Writing a thank-you note is a simple thing. Still, it "can make a big difference," he says. We feel good when we do nice things for others.

"It's the sort of thing we should do more often," he says.

Directions: Use the information found in the article to identify the **best** response for each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R1: Cite text evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly</th>
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| 1. According to the text, what effect does writing a thank-you letter have on the writer?  
  A. It makes the writer feel depressed.  
  B. The writer wants to call the recipient of the thank-you letter.  
  C. It improves the writer’s mood.  
  D. The writers worry that the recipient will make fun of them for writing a thank-you letter. |

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<tr>
<th>R1: Cite text evidence to support an analysis of what the text says implicitly</th>
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| 2. What is the author’s purpose for writing this article?  
  A. to compare and contrast studies at two different universities on why people worry about thank-you notes  
  B. to suggest that people should write heartfelt thank-you notes to everyone they have met in life  
  C. to indicate that recipients do feel a little strange about receiving thank-you notes, but it's okay  
  D. to show that thank-you notes have positive effects for writers and recipients, despite writers’ worries |

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<th>R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases</th>
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| 3. Read this paragraph from the section *Spreading Good Feelings*:  
  The writers did not think it would have much of an effect on the person getting their letter. They did not know how surprised the *recipient* would feel. They did not know how much it would improve that person's mood. The writers thought it would be awkward for someone to get a letter of thanks. However, that was not the case.  

What is the definition of the word *recipient* as it is used in the above passage?  
A. a person who receives or is given something  
B. a slip of paper you are given after you buy something to prove that you paid for it  
C. a professor at a college such as the University of Chicago  
D. a guest speaker at a college |

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<tr>
<th>R2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text</th>
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| 4. One main idea of the article is that _____.  
  A. Kumar and Epley asked a class to write thank-you notes  
  B. students send thank-you notes by email  
  C. studies show that thank-you notes can help people  
  D. parents ask their kids to write thank-you notes |