

White Elephant – Thank You Note Assignment

When someone does something nice for you, it is not okay to simply send a “thx” text or express your thanks via a Facebook IM. Instead, you need to master the skill of **formal thank you note writing**. Whether you’re sending a thank you note to a teacher for writing a college recommendation letter (hint, hint!) or even sending a follow-up note to a job interviewer you really want to impress, you will stand out from your peers by crafting a quality note of sincere gratitude.

To that end, we just participated in a White Elephant gift exchange. No matter how heinous or useless the gift, you must write a sincere note of thanks for the gift you received. Your note must include the following:

1. Greeting

As the most basic part of the note, this is pretty self-explanatory. “Dear” works in all situations, though it’s fine to use “Hi” for close friends. If it’s someone you don’t know well or if you feel uncomfortable using a greeting prior to the person’s name, skip it and just start the note with the gift-giver’s name instead. For this assignment, we’re going to pretend that your wealthy Aunt Ethel has sent you this strange gift. Aunt Ethel is slightly goofy; she’s the one who sends you a crisp \$5 bill on your birthday and whose holiday gifts are always a bit, well, unusual. She also, though, once helped out your cousin with college tuition, so it’s a good idea to stay in her favor, right? Begin your note with: “Dear Aunt Ethel,”

2. Mention the Specific Gift You Received

It’s considered somewhat rude if you don’t specifically mention the gift. If you just refer to the item as “the gift,” it implies to Aunt Ethel that you don’t remember what she gave you or, worse, don’t care. Name the gift and add an adjective or two to describe it: the bejeweled jean jacket; the glazed orange ceramic dragon; the gray-and-green camouflage Snuggie, a blanket with sleeves.

3. Why You Like It

Every thank you note should be accompanied by an explanation of why you like the gift. Does it match a favorite sweater? Go perfectly with another gift you were just given? Is it something that you’ve been wanting for years? Give an insight as to why this gift means something to you. Even if this isn’t true, it needs to sound sincere.

4. A Future Use

How will you use the item in the future? Is there a special event you know will be the perfect occasion to wear the new rainbow trout-adorned tie? Do you look forward to using your new fondue set for your next get together with friends? Will you set the seashell-shaped picture frame on the bookshelf in your room? Tell Aunt Ethel how you plan to use the item for a future occasion or in your everyday life.

5. Ask About the Giver

Show interest in the life of your note’s recipient. Ask her how she is, wish her luck on an upcoming vacation, or let her know you look forward to seeing her at a future event. Don’t make the note all about you.

6. Wrap It Up

For close friends and family, it’s appropriate to end with “Love,” and then add your name. For people you aren’t particularly close to, just sign off with “Sincerely,” or “Warmest regards,” and then add your name. For Aunt Ethel, you need to use the “Love,” option.

So, get to it, already! On a separate sheet of paper, craft the world’s most amazing thank you note.

