

Thank you notes are a useful, clever final move in your interview experience. However, like all acts of communication, they can be better or worse. Better thank you notes help you succeed; worse ones do not.

To be effective, a thank you note should be sent within 24 HOURS of the interview. Submission can be paper or electronic. The note should have the following parts:

- Appropriate greeting
- Thank you for time
- Specific experience from the interview
- Final pitch for good qualities
- Appropriate close

You will send a thank you note to one of the interviewers following your interview – you do not have to send it to Dr. Schafer, but she MUST have a copy of it for grading purposes! You may send an email or hand-write a note.

### Anatomy of a GOOD EXAMPLE

Dear Dr. Schafer,

I would like to thank you for taking the time to ask me a few questions and getting to know me a little better during our interview. I especially enjoyed your question concerning my experience in food service. In the medical field it is imperative to evaluate what is best for the patient, and your question made me consider a relationship between food and health I had not considered before. I appreciate your interest in my application, and I am excited to hear from the University of Florida's Physician's Assistant Program. Through my integrity, ambition, and hard-work ethic, I hope to contribute to the already dynamic, focused, and devoted program here in Gainesville. Have an excellent day, and thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,  
Brittney C.

The diagram includes the following callouts:

- Appropriate greeting:** Points to "Dear Dr. Schafer,"
- Begins with "thank you":** Points to the start of the main paragraph.
- Incorporates specific experience from interview:** Points to "I especially enjoyed your question concerning my experience in food service."
- Appropriate close:** Points to "Sincerely, Brittney C."
- Specific pitch for qualities:** Points to "Through my integrity, ambition, and hard-work ethic, I hope to contribute..."
- Extra polite final line a nice touch:** Points to "Have an excellent day, and thank you again for your time."

Dr. Schafer,

Thank you so much for taking your time to make my interview at Vanderbilt University Medical School so enjoyable today. I especially enjoyed talking with you about your son and possible ways to calm an "unsoothable" child in the medical practice. In addition, I appreciate the information you gave me about the possibilities available for medical students who would like to work with the pediatric critical care center at the Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. I look forward to attending Vanderbilt Medical School in the fall.

Sincerely,  
Kara L.

Dear Dr. Arnold,

I really enjoyed my visit to Stanford. I want to thank you, your Dean of Admissions, and first year medical student, for taking the time to interview me. I especially enjoyed the opportunity to discuss my experience with the Shand's Cuddler volunteer program, which has been a unique hands-on learning experience for me, and my volunteering as a tennis coach assistant through which I honed leadership and interpersonal skills. I am a self-motivated, dedicated student who is steadfast in meeting my goals, and I know Stanford can use an asset like me. I am excited that you offer such great volunteer opportunities such as the SMSA (Stanford Medical Student Association) and women in medicine, which I will definitely take advantage of. However, I am most impressed with Stanford's unparalleled opportunities in clinical patient care. I am looking forward to being part of your program in the fall.

Sincerely,  
Jessica S.

**Thank you note** -- An important and often forgotten aspect of gracefully finishing an interview, the "thank you" note is addressed to one of the interviewers. A successful "thank you" note

*A thank-you note may seem obvious, but I can assure you that the majority of students do not send them.*

- thanks for interviewer for their times
- specifies some aspect of the interview that was particularly interesting,
- and provides the opportunity for you to pitch yourself one last time!

## The Two Most Important Post-Interview Activities

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There are two simple steps you can take to make a lasting impression after your interview and greatly increase your odds of success.

The first is to call the interviewer to thank them for their time. If possible, you may want to add additional information which was not discussed in the interview. An example would be: "I understand from speaking with the receptionist that Microsoft Office is your corporate software standard. I just wanted to mention that I'm also fully proficient in each of the tools in the Office suite." This phone call should ideally take place the same day. If you are unable to reach the interviewer directly, leave a voicemail message.

The second activity is to immediately **write the interviewer a short note**, thanking them for their time and reemphasizing your interest in the position. Then do your best to get it to them as quickly as possible. E-mail it, fax it, hand deliver it, messenger it, use overnight mail, whatever. But be sure they have it before the end of the following day. Ideally, you want to get it in their hands by the end of the day of the interview or first thing the following morning. Why? Because the quicker your letter arrives, the greater the likelihood of affecting a positive impact.

Doesn't everyone follow up like this? Hardly. Virtually no one calls after an interview and few take the time to write a thank you letter. Those who do write letters generally send them via the postal service, which can arrive as much as a full week after the interview. The simple gestures of a phone call and thank you letter can make a big difference in separating you from your competition.

And if you interviewed with multiple individuals, make sure each thank you letter is unique. Common language is acceptable, but do not simply change the name at the top of the letter. Your application, resume, and other materials will likely be stored in a single file, usually in the possession of the person guiding you through the hiring process. Your thank you letters will eventually find their way back to this central file. Yes, we do compare notes. And what seemed to be a unique and original note can actually work against you if there are two or three duplicates collected together in your file. It has taken a great deal of effort to get this far. Take the extra time to make this final impression a positive one.