

The Value of a Handwritten Thank You

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Q: I have always insisted that my children respond to gifts with a written note; however, my twelve-year-old son is starting to balk at this. How can I convince him to write, or would a verbal thank you be enough?

A: You are to be commended for your insistence upon handwritten correspondence. Children should be encouraged to get into the habit of writing thank you notes even before they can print their name. If they can hold a crayon, then they are ready. I can remember sending stick figure drawings and finger painted pictures to grandparents after special occasions, and they quickly became treasures.

Any type of “thank you” is always better than none at all. However, handwritten correspondence sent through the regular mail is the highest form of a thank you. According to standard rules of etiquette, unless restricted by a disability, the three types of letters that should be handwritten are: notes of condolence, replies to formal invitations and thank you notes. A handwritten letter is one of the priceless, most enduring gifts we can offer one another, especially in this day of e-mail.

Your son is at an age when he’d rather be out with his friends than writing notes. This does not absolve him of his responsibility to show appreciation for birthday, Christmas or Hanukkah presents. Although rules of etiquette require a thank you be sent within a couple of days after receiving a gift, a two week period would be an appropriate time frame for children.

Begin your persuasion by allowing your son to select a box of his own stationery and perhaps give him a supply of personalized address labels and postage stamps. If that’s not enough to convince him to write, you can tell him how happy you’ll be to save him the time and effort by returning each of the presents!

Do you have an etiquette question you want Jill to answer in her monthly column? Visit: www.DefiningManners.com and click “In the News” to submit your questions or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.

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