

Lisa Sargent's Thank You Letter Template

[Your masthead]

[Merge Fields]

Name

Address1

Address2

City, State ZIP

DATE

Dear <<Name>>,

[Lead Paragraph] Here you'll write a 2 or 3 line paragraph that draws the donor in, other than "On behalf of..." or "Thank you for..." _____

[Paragraph 2] If you haven't thanked above, you can here: "Thank you for your support."

[Paragraph 3] Here you'll write a few lines letting donor know the gift was received. Include the amount of donor's gift, date received by your organization, and that it's being put to good use.

[Paragraph 4] In this paragraph let donor know about all the great things s/he now makes possible – that is, how, specifically, you're using the gift. A very easy way to begin this is by saying something like, "Already, your gift is working wonders, providing everything from _____ to _____, and so much more. Thank you!"

[Paragraph 5] Close with another brief heartfelt thanks. Let them know how wonderful they are, how you couldn't do what you do without their generosity and kindness. 1 or 2 lines.

Warm Closing [such as "With my deepest gratitude," as opposed to "Sincerely,"]

President or CEO's name
Title, Your Organization Name

P.S. [Use a PS in your thank yous.] Here you can let donor know when you'll next update them on the good work they support, and how they can reach you if they need to. Example: "In the months ahead you'll receive our XYZ newsletter to update you on all the good work you support. Meanwhile, if you have questions, please call us at XXX-XXX-XXXX or email xxxxxx@yourorg." And... be sure to thank them one more time!

The Better Donation Thank You Letter Checklist:

From Lisa Sargent's Free Thank You Letter Clinic on SOFII,
<http://www.sofii.org/node/258>.

1. Is it personalized? (As in "Dear Lisa" vs. "Dear Friend")
2. Is the gift amount noted?
3. Do you start with something other than "Thank you for your gift of..."?
Use an exciting lead.
4. Do you tell the donor when and how they will next hear from you?
5. If this is a repeat gift, do you also thank donor for their:
 - a. Past generosity (and indicate all its made possible), and
 - b. Continued contributions/support
6. If this is a gift membership (meaning made by someone else on giftee's behalf):
 - a. Do not thank the giftee, but talk about what "this kind gift makes possible"
 - b. Send a thank you letter to the giftor so they know their gift is on its way as intended
7. Say something new or timely in the P.S. – videos online, a holiday message, an upcoming opportunity to visit or meet with you, etc.
8. Include a contact number they can use if they have questions (you can add an e-mail, but not the generic "info@yourorg.org." Direct them to a warm body, please.)
9. Do you need to thank them for something specific? For example:
 - a. Membership renewal
 - b. Holiday appeal
 - c. Memorial gift
 - d. Capital campaign (focus on all the good this new building/machine/wing will do)

10. Do you need to reference something specific? For example:

- a. A gift you'll be sending
- b. A certificate or photo you've enclosed

11. Do you have a website? Mention it in the letter, with a simple call-for-action to drive them there. ("Keep up with all the ways you're helping XYZ at www.XYZ.org.")

12. And remember to:

- a. Keep the letter short (3-4 paras plus a P.S.)
- b. Add required tax-deductible language
- c. Share with them "all your gift makes possible..."

13. Use more "you" than "we" and "our."

14. Say thank you more than once.

15. Proof your letter:

- a. Use spell check
- b. Print the letter and read it out loud, word for word

16. If you can, hand-sign them all. If you have too many donors, determine an amount at which you or a board member will hand-sign. And an amount for a phone call.

17. Make sure your donation thank you does NOT include:

- a. An additional "ask"
- b. An upgrade to monthly giving or other program
- c. ~~A gift reply envelope (even if there is no ask)~~ *Update, 2013: although our thank you letters don't include an ask, many of my clients include a reply envelope. It hasn't seemed to affect retention either way. But that said, we haven't done a head-to-head test so I can't say for certain.