

The ins and outs of the post-interview thank you email

Is sending a thank you email after a job interview required? No. However, sending one will absolutely help you stand out or be remembered. In order to construct a post-interview, thank you email that is meaningful and professional, you'll want to follow some basic guidelines and see some examples.

Why You Should Send One

A thank you email after an interview makes a positive impression on hiring decision-makers. Here's data to help you understand just how much a thank you note means.

"68% of recruiters/hiring managers say a thank you email after the interview matters" – (Talent Inc.)

And there's another reason to write a thank you after your interview. It's the polite thing to do.

Sending someone a thank you may not be a normal activity for you, but the interviewer did invest their time to meet with you and that is worthy of saying thanks. You are being polite and showing respect.

And there's one final reason to send a thank you. Your note provides you with one more opportunity, perhaps the last one, to remind the interviewer that you are very interested in the job and are indeed the right candidate.

Here are three points you want to address in the thank you letter you send after your interview:

- Your interest in the role
- Your fit with the company
- The value you will deliver if hired

Additionally, sending a thank you helps make you memorable. Believe it or not, very few candidates send them!

When an organisation interview lots of people, it is very easy for them to mix candidates up or forget specifics. Your thank you helps remind them who you are!

How to Write a Thank You Email

As you craft your thank you email or note, keep in mind your format, formality of the language you use, and summarise your key points concisely. You want to come across as professional and following the recommendations below will help you accomplish this.



Format

Either use a business letter format (examples below) or if you are using email, be sure to include a meaningful subject line. You'll also want to include an email signature that has your contact information. Use appropriate spacing between paragraphs and use a professional font style with black text.

Greeting/Salutation

E"Dear", "Hello", and "Hi" are ways of starting your thank you email. But which do you use? You probably wore a more formal outfit to your interview, so when you address the thank you, it's best to keep it formal as well. "Dear" is more formal than "hello". And "hi" is too casual for a thank you email.

Next, you probably wonder if you should use the person's first name or should you use Mr./Ms. Last name? This is a bit trickier. While you want to show respect, you also have started to build a relationship.

Think back to the interview. How did the interviewer introduce themselves? Did they use their first and last name? That's one sign you could use in your thank you. If the person you are interviewing with is very senior in the organisation, you may also want to use the more formal Mr./Mrs Last Name.

Another option you could try is referring to them by their full name. This option is gender-neutral and may be a more appropriate way to address your interviewer.

Content

Your post-interview thank you email doesn't need to be long. In fact, three paragraphs are all you need. Here's what to put into each section and capture the attention of the reader, your interviewer.

Paragraph 1 | The first paragraph should clearly explain why you are writing. And in this case, you are writing to say thank you for the job interview and the interviewer's time.

Paragraph 2 | This section of your thank you explains how your specific skills are a match for the job. Using the information you gained from the interview, address several (3-5) of the top qualifications you match.

Consider including why each matching qualification will benefit the company or why you feel a qualification will be of value.

This might also be an opportunity to address any of your areas of weakness during the interview or to improve upon an answer you gave during the interview.

Paragraph 3 | The final paragraph emphasises your gratitude for the interview and the opportunity to learn more about the role and organisation. Add a final sentence that includes exactly when you will follow up based on the question and answer you got during the interview.

Email vs. Hard Copy

Deciding whether to email your thank you note or send a hard copy thank you letter through the mail isn't about which is easier for you. It's about the impression it will make on the recruiter or hiring manager. Keep in mind that email messages are shorter and considered a bit less formal. It's also easy to delete an email message, meaning it doesn't have the same tangible impact as a hard copy letter.

Another factor to consider when deciding to send your thank you through email or through regular mail is when the company plans to make a decision. (You should ask this question during the interview, so you know when to follow up.) If the employer says they'll be making a decision within a day or so, emailing your thank you after the interview is the better option.

Sometimes candidates want to do both. And if you feel like that covers your bases, go for it.

Sending an email immediately following the interview checks the box for getting it done. Go ahead and send a short, well-crafted email thanking the interviewer(s) for their time and indicate that you have mailed them a letter as well.

Just remember, if you do decide to send both, your thank you letter sent through the mail shouldn't be exactly the same as the one you emailed.

Additional Tips & Advice

You can find lots of advice on how to write a thank you email after your interview, but it's important to remember that not all the advice will apply to you. However, there is one rule everyone should follow... send it within 24 hours.

You'll find additional recommendations and tips to help you make the best decisions for sending a thank you based on your interview situation.

Everyone Gets a Thank You

Each person you interviewed with should receive a separate thank you email afterward. That's why it's important for you to ask each person for a business card either at the beginning or at the end of the interview.

If you realise you forgot to get their contact information, reach out to your point of contact at the company and ask for the information so you can send a proper thank-you note.

But never send a group "thank you" to everyone who interviewed you. Recall a specific question they asked or customise your message. For example, if you will be working at a peer level, your message might address how you look forward to working alongside them.

As uncommon as it sounds, the people who interviewed you may compare messages.

Send Within 24 Hours

The best time to send your interview thank you email is while the whole event is still fresh in everyone's mind.

Sending an email within 24 hours allows you to refresh the interviewer's memory and remind them of your strengths.

A more tangible reminder would be to send a slightly modified typed or written note through the mail which means that the interviewer would receive it 2-5 days later.

Sending one or both is fine. But you do need to send it quickly while the company is still considering your candidacy!

Virtual and Phone Interviews Still Deserve a Thank You

Since so many interviews are taking place virtually (either on the phone or on video) you should know that a thank you email is still required. The interviewer still spent time explaining the role, their company, and answering your questions.

Sending an email is probably the best way to ensure they see your thank you, as they may not be going into their office.

Handwritten vs. Typed

If you decide to send a hard copy in addition to your email, many career professionals suggest that it should be handwritten to add a personal touch. If you feel you can adequately convey all this information and have presentable handwriting, go ahead and write your thank-you note.

However, few people will judge your candidacy based on your handwriting or the fact that you took the extra effort to handwrite a note. What is most important is the message your thank you contains. The decision to handwrite or type your thank you message is up to you. Use what seems most appropriate for your situation.

Bonus

To ensure your thank you email after the interview makes you look like the most qualified and interested candidate, keep these things in mind:

- Check your writing for spelling and grammar errors
- Pay special attention to the spelling of the person's name and company name
- Use good quality thank you notes or paper if you are sending a hard copy
- Customise your message and details for each and every interview and interviewer
- Be as specific as possible when it comes to talking about how your skills and qualifications match the job, and why that is of value to the organisation
- Keep it professional and avoid mentioning personal details
- Provide any information requested, such as references or samples of work, as soon as possible but in a separate email from your thank you.
- Don't ask about salary, vacations, or other benefits in your thank you note. Wait until you have another interview or a job offer before bringing these up if they haven't been discussed already.

Follow Up

When (not if) you don't hear from the company after sending your post-interview thank you email, expect to follow up. Don't assume you are no longer in the running. There could be many reasons the company has gone silent. If you are truly interested in the job, follow up weekly until you receive a response. Be polite, respectful, and understand that the company, recruiter or hiring manager is not purposefully being rude.

Filling a job often takes longer than anyone expects. Be prepared and persistent. But most importantly, always keep your job search active. Don't stop looking for new jobs until you've landed one!

Hannah Morgan is a career sherpa, guiding new job seekers through the treacherous terrain of job search.

