

## Ways to Say "Thank You"

In America, it is the custom to express appreciation to people who help you in any way. Because it is commonly practiced, most people expect to be thanked when they do something for someone. Sometimes the absence of a "thank you" is misunderstood to mean the effort to help was not appreciated or was not wanted. There are a variety of ways to express gratitude, and the type of help received can help one determine what method of saying "thank you" is most appropriate.

A foreign student should not be overly concerned about how to say "thank-you," most important is to remember to always express appreciation in one way or another. One should also feel free to be creative in the avenues used.

Here are some possibilities:

1. Always verbally communicate appreciation. When the favor shown did not require a great deal of time or effort, a verbal "thank-you" is enough.
2. Write a short letter or "thank-you" note. Small note cards with "Thank You" printed on the front are sold in most campus bookstores, as well as "Thank You" greeting cards. However, regular stationary is often used and perhaps less expensive.
3. Give a *small, inexpensive* gift. The gift can be purchased or something you made.
4. Treat the friend to a meal, a movie, or just a snack (ice cream, frozen yogurt, pie and coffee, etc.)

If the favor shown is small, a verbal "thank you" is adequate. For example, if you ask someone for directions, for help with a homework problem, for information, etc., saying "thank you" verbally is enough. The closer the relationship, the less formal the expression of gratitude needs to be. If a classmate is your close friend, a verbal "thanks" is probably enough. If another student whom you do not know well spends many hours helping you prepare for a test, perhaps a written note would be nice. If an American student helps you on a regular basis (weekly or before each test, etc.) perhaps at the end of the school term you could give him or her a small gift and/or a written note of appreciation. To write a thank you note each week would not be appropriate or necessary.

When an American family or friend invites you into their home for a meal, mailing a thank you note to them a day or so later would be appropriate. It is

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not necessary to carry a gift to the home when you go to eat, but you may if you wish since that may be your custom. It is not the American custom but would not be strange or inappropriate. A small bouquet of flowers or a small box of candy would also be appropriate. If you stay overnight in a home, a thank you note should be left on the bed or bedside table as you leave or mailed to the hostess soon after. A small gift can also be left for the hostess with the note or presented to the hostess prior to leaving, but is not necessary. If your time in the family's home is an extended visit, a small gift should be given to the hostess. If you spend Christmas with an American family, prepare to give a gift to the family. It doesn't need to be an expensive gift. Present the gift at the time they exchange gifts on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, or just quietly place the gift under their Christmas tree with the other gifts. It is not necessary to present gifts for other holidays.

If an American friend gives you a gift, it would be nice to write a short note to express gratitude to them.

## **Table Manners for a Typical Evening Meal**

1. Sit - the host will tell you where to sit, or you ask.
2. Wait for others to start eating. Many homes will pray first.
3. Family style meal - food is passed to the right.
4. Try a little of everything - do not take a Lot of anything.
5. If you do not want something, just pass it on; You do not need to say anything. If they ask, say, "It looks good, but I think I won't have any thank you."
6. Keep the table and table-cloth as clean as possible. Do not put bones or anything on the table. Things that are not eaten should be put on your plate.
7. Do not spit anything out. If there is something in your mouth that you cannot swallow, quietly put it in your paper napkin and then go on (e.g. bones, seeds, etc.)
8. Do not talk with food in your mouth! Wait until you have swallowed everything before talking.
9. Burping - don't!! It is considered rude.
10. Slurping - don't!! Drinking soup or eating noodles - be quiet.

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11. When food is passed to you say, "Thank You."
12. When you would like more of some food and it is not right in front of you, say, "Please pass the green beans."
13. Do not reach across the table or in front of someone to get something - that is rude. Ask them to pass it to you.
14. If you need to leave the table to go to the bathroom or do something, say, "Excuse me for a moment, please."
15. If your hostess wants to serve you but you don't want to eat it, say, "Thank you. It looks very good, but I'm not quite used to American food yet. Maybe next time, thanks."
16. Meals are to be slow, pleasant, leisurely times. Enjoy your food, but talk too.
17. Watch how fast others are eating. Try not to be too slow or too fast - keep up with their pace.
18. When you are finished eating, say "What a delicious meal! Thank you so much." Wait for all to be finished before leaving the table.
19. Do not touch your nose, hair or teeth at the table.
20. Toothpicks - are not usually on the table in a home. After the meal, go to the bathroom and clean your teeth if you need to. In restaurants, they are usually at the counter where you pay as you go out. Again, it is best to clean your teeth in the bathroom.

## **Manners for Overnight Guests at a Family Home**

Take: toothbrush, tooth paste, pajamas (towels, soap are provided)

1. Ask clearly about times - when to arrive and when to go home.
2. Ask about the family schedule - be considerate of their needs.

bedtime - go into your room at a reasonable hour, perhaps 9 or 10 p.m. to allow the family to be busy with their things after you go to bed.

morning - ask your host before you go to bed, what time they will be ready for breakfast. If they say 8 am then come out of your room at 8 am.

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3. Bathroom use - if you are sharing a bathroom with others, never stay in it for longer than 30 minutes at a time. when you come out, leave it clean, dry and all your things taken out. Take the hair out of the bath tub drain.

4. Phone - ask before you use the phone. Talk no longer than 5 to 10 minutes at a time. Do not call before 8 am or after 10 PM.

5. Meals - it is courteous to help in preparation and cleaning up after meals. Ask if you can. If not, you can stand and talk to the host while they are busy.

6. Children - you never have the right to criticize or scold other people's children. You always have the right to praise them and talk to them, showing interest in their affairs.

7. Pets - if you are allergic to or very afraid of cats or dogs, it is best to ask if the family has one before you go to their house. You never have the right to criticize, scold or hit someone's pet. Sometimes people treat their pets like their children.

8. Thanks! - With each meal, snack, or helpful favor, always say an immediate thank you.

As you leave, say one sincere thank you. The next day write a thank you note.

9. Your room - Each time you leave your guest room, leave it neat and clean. Make your bed and put your things away. Do not close the door when you are out of the room. Do close the door when you are in the room and want to sleep

10. If you break anything - tell your host immediately saying, "I am so sorry, I broke your\_\_\_\_\_". They will not be angry and will readily forgive you.

11. Television - Your host will choose the program. Most people do not like to be disturbed in the middle of a program. Save your questions or comments until commercials. Do not make television into an English lesson when with others - TV is for relaxation.

12. Air conditioning - your host will set the temperature. If you are cold, put on a sweater - but do not touch the controls.

13. Do not ask to borrow the host's brush, comb, or toothbrush.

14. Do not attempt to tell your host when to go to bed, how to care for his children, what to eat if he has a cold, etc. This is their home and they can do whatever they like.

15. A closed door means that someone is inside usually. KNOCK and wait to be invited in before entering. Americans do not usually lock doors in their homes such as the bathroom and bedroom. Closing the door is usually sufficient.

## **Insurance Information**

### **Health**

With the high costs of health care in the United States, everyone should have health insurance. Most Universities and colleges require foreign students to have coverage and offer insurance through the Student Health Center on campus. The rates are quite reasonable and all students should take advantage of it.

### **Auto**

If you drive a car in the United States most states require you to have insurance. Don't drive in the United States without insurance. People are often sued for hundreds of thousands of U.S. dollars after being involved in car accidents. If you drive a five year old car or newer, you should carry coverage both for your car and liability insurance. If you drive a six year old or older car, it would be better to save your money and fix or repair your car yourself. You only need collision insurance--but you do need insurance.

## **Personal Grooming Tips for Women**

There are many many beauty products on the market. Of course, you may choose not to use any, and that is fine. However, if you do choose to use them you can purchase them at department stores or special stores just for cosmetics - but, these are VERY expensive. For good, but cheap, cosmetics go to a large grocery store or Wal Mart, K-Mart or Target.

If you have never used cosmetics, but would like to try, Ask your room-mate to help you. She would probably enjoy showing you what to buy and how to apply it.

Most college women also shave their legs and underarms. You can buy special shavers (either electric or manual) to do this.

Also--be sure and wear deodorant. It is offensive to many Americans for someone not to wear deodorant.

Usually college women only go to the beauty shop for hair cuts and permanents (to get their hair curled). They are quite expensive.

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The monthly menstruation cycle is something that is very rarely talked about in America in situations where there are both men and women. In your dorm the women may talk about it more.

If you are too uncomfortable with your menstruation cycle to attend class or a meeting you can say, "sorry, I was not feeling well." That is all you need to say.

"Feminine products" can be bought in any grocery store. There will be one large aisle just for these products with MANY different brands and types to choose from.

There are two types of products commonly used in America.

1. Napkins - Do not put these in the toilet after use. Wrap it up in tissue before putting in a trash can.
2. Tampons - these are in common use among students and are very convenient. You do not put these in the toilet after use. They will not hurt the toilet system, unless there is a sign above the toilet telling you not to do it. The plastic part of the applicator should be wrapped in tissue and thrown in the trash.

## **American Bathrooms**

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Bath tubs almost always have a "Shower Curtain". Put the curtain inside the tub when you shower - keep the rest of the bathroom dry. Sometimes showers have sliding glass doors. Be sure they are closed when you take a shower. You might ask your host before you get in the shower how to operate the shower. Each one is a little different.

FLUSH the toilet after EACH use. Do not try to keep quiet by not flushing.

Put the toilet paper IN the toilet after use. Do not put it in the trash can.

Close the door when you go in and leave it open when you come out.

**Dorm Baths - usually are 2 different kinds:**

1. "bath and shower in the hall"

-the toilets are separate from the showers

-some have private rooms (stalls) for taking a shower.

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-some have one large room with several shower "heads" where 4 to 6 people shower together.

-most dorms still have separate bathrooms for the men and the women. Be sure and check on this before entering.

## 2. "Private bath"

-each room has its own toilet and shower

-3 or 4 rooms may share one bath.

### **Using a public bathroom:**

1. Be as modest as possible (wear a robe when going down the hall, close the shower curtain when you are showering).
2. Be as quick as possible - others might be waiting.
3. Be as clean and dry as possible.

### **Washing out underwear, etc.:**

Americans use washing machines for almost everything.

Washing out your underclothes in the bathroom sink is okay, but hang them in your own room to dry, not in the bathroom.

### **Men**

When using the toilet, be careful! Be accurate!

Often there are carpets on the bathroom floor, so do not get them wet. Put the seat down and close it before you leave the bathroom. Leave it clean and dry.

### **Americans almost all use and think important:**

- Deodorant (you can buy at any drugstore, grocery store, or WalMart, Target or K-Mart)
- Deodorant soap (it is marked on the soap wrapper)
- Brushing your teeth a couple of times a day
- Daily shower (usually in the morning)
- Nail clippers

## Dorm Room and Bedroom Culture

### Roommates

It is common for new students to share a room with other university students. The number of roommates will depend upon the university, but will range anywhere from one to three. The most common setting is for two students to share one room. The room will have beds, desks, closets and storage compartments (drawers) for personal items. The furnishings will be plain but adequate.

A key to success in your studies is a good understanding and a positive relationship with your roommate. You will need to learn your roommate's schedule and activities in order to have a positive experience from the beginning. Your roommate may become your close friend or you may not spend much time together. It all depends on you and your roommate. Respect your roommate's possessions and privacy and ask your roommate to do the same for you. Some roommates are very trustworthy and some are not. A good rule to go by is "If you value something, keep it out of sight and under lock and key." This will keep your roommate from being tempted to take something that belongs to you.

If you discover that your schedule and your roommate's schedule conflict and you have little time to study, you will find the library a nice quiet place to get away and study. Some dormitories are not very quiet and if you need a quiet place to study, you may need to go to the library.

### Personal Habits

On the whole American females are more modest than American males. Males may wear little clothing while in their rooms. You will need to prepare yourselves because some will be more open than others. Feel free to continue to wear clothing as you are accustomed to wearing in your house or room.

Sleeping in American beds may be a new experience for some of you. American mattresses are usually much softer than international students are used to. Americans sleep between two cotton sheets. In the cooler months a blanket can be added for warmth. Bedding and electric blankets can be purchased inexpensively.

You may have the option of having a telephone in your room. You are responsible for the payment of the bill. If you decide you need a phone make certain that you and your roommate have an understanding of how the phone will be handled. Public phones are available and can be an option. Most dorm rooms automatically have a phone in them.

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American males (and sometimes females) talk freely (and sometimes tend to exaggerate) about their sexuality. You will probably hear some graphic details of "last Friday night's experience." Sexuality in America is not like you have seen in the movies.

In most dorm rooms smoking is not allowed. Be sure and check the policy.

## **Do's and Don'ts of American Student Life**

1. Never pick at your nose in public.
2. Never talk about someone's weight --"you are very fat".
3. Never ask "how much did you pay for that" or "how much money do you make".
4. Never smoke indoors (unless given permission).
5. Never change the TV station, the air conditioner or fan controls in someone else's home. If you are cold, put on a sweater.
6. Never hit anybody - animal or human.
7. Never talk about the bathroom.
8. Never spend more than 5 to 10 minutes on someone else's phone.
9. Never bring a friend with you to a party or dinner - unless you have asked the host if it is okay.
10. Never spend more than 20-30 minutes in the bathroom at one time--others may be waiting.
11. Never burp, belch, or pass gas in public - if you do be sure and say, "excuse me".
12. If you sneeze in public, cover your mouth and say "excuse me".
13. Always be on time - between 5 minutes early and 5 minutes late, no more.
14. If you say that you will attend something--attend! Don't say "yes" to be nice and then not show up.

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15. If for some reason you cannot attend, call the host ahead of time to explain.
16. Use deodorant and brush your teeth or use mouthwash. Americans are very sensitive about body odors.
17. Driving - do not honk the horn, except in very dangerous emergencies. It is considered very rude, except in New York City.
18. Do not flash your lights at someone to tell them to hurry or get out of your way.
19. If you are driving on bright lights for better visibility and a car comes toward you, dim your lights.
20. Before 8 AM and after 9 PM Be Quiet. No loud TV or radio.
21. Do not wipe off your cup or silverware in a restaurant. They are clean. If you see that they are not clean ask the waiter or waitress for a new one.
22. When moving out of your dorm room or apartment-leave it clean. always leave a place even cleaner than you found it--people will have fond memories of you.
23. Do not address your school teacher as "teacher". Call him by name: for example, Professor Brown, Mr. Smith, Ms, Jones.
24. Never throw trash on the ground or out a window--it is illegal.
25. Buy trash bags for your trash and put it out only at the appointment time at the right place.
26. When you have a guest come to visit, turn down, or off the TV set.