

# Writing a Gratitude Letter

## Overview:

Write a letter to a teacher, relative, mentor, or coach who influenced your life in a positive way.

A gratitude letter helps you focus on the positive influence of another person in your life. Writing this letter is a reminder that there are people who care about you, that your life matters to them, and by extension, that you matter to others. Delivering the letter in person, and even reading it out loud to them, can be a powerful and meaningful experience for you and the recipient. Remember the insights from the Kumar & Epley study; we tend to overestimate how awkward delivering such a letter will feel, and we underestimate how much the person will appreciate it.

Describing what you are grateful for is an essential practice in any thoughtful thank-you. Taking the time to reflect deeply on why you are expressing thanks helps you recognize and appreciate the blessings in your life.

While you write, consider these items:

- What do you most remember them doing or saying?
- What is an important memory or experience from your time with them?
- How would your life be different if you had not met them?
- What character strengths do you appreciate most about them?
- What makes them special?
- What makes them important in your life story?

Whenever you thank someone, it is good practice to think in detail about what you are grateful for—*why* you are saying thank you—in detail. This helps you appreciate all you have and all the positive things in your life.

## Imagine Delivering a Letter Like This

Dear [Name],

I wanted to take a moment to truly express my gratitude for everything you've done and the impact you've had on my life.

I still vividly remember [specific thing they did or said], which has stayed with me over the years. That moment, more than any other, showed me [how kind/wise/funny/inspiring/etc.] you are. One memory that stands out to me is [describe a significant experience or memory with this person]. That experience has shaped me in ways I didn't fully appreciate at the time, but now I can see how it contributed to who I am today.

As I think about how my life might be different if I had never met you, I realize how much you've enriched it. Your [character strengths like kindness, patience, honesty, etc.] have not only inspired me but have also taught me to approach life with more [specific trait they modeled].

What makes you truly special to me is [explain their unique qualities or behaviors]. I believe that the way you [something they do that is meaningful] sets you apart from anyone else I know.

You are an essential part of my life story because [why they are important—how they helped you grow, comforted you, or made life better in some way]. I'm so grateful to have you in my life, and I want you to know how much I appreciate your presence and the role you play in my journey.

Thank you for everything.

With all my appreciation,

[You]