Thankfulness strengthens relationships. Showing appreciation demonstrates that you value your donors and count them as an integral part of your team. It generates goodwill, makes donors even more enthusiastic about your organization, and often leads to increased support and additional gifts. Thanking your donors is the most important part of donor stewardship.

A unique thank you shows your donors that they are paramount to you and your organization. With a little creativity, even small organizations can show appreciation with exceptional thank yous. In this guide, we’ll dig into what makes a thank you meaningful, what to avoid, when to say thank you, and 10 creative ideas to get you started.
10 Creative Ideas for Saying Thank You

A meaningful thank you can take many forms—from a traditional letter to a special event. No matter what size your nonprofit is, you can communicate your gratitude in unique and personal ways. Use these ten ideas to brainstorm new ways you can share a memorable thank you with your donors.

1) A Welcome Packet
If you’re looking for a way to make your first thank you unique, a welcome packet may be the answer. A welcome packet is a versatile way to show appreciation, since it can include any number of meaningful items. In addition to a thank you letter, you may want to add photos of your work or the community you serve, an impact story, or (depending on the size of the donation) small gifts such as an item made by someone in your community. Welcome packets are a great way to not only express thanks, but to also share more inspirational information about what your organization is doing with the help of donors.

2) Birthday Cards
People feel good when someone acknowledges their birthday. It communicates that someone made the effort to remember and took the time to send a cheerful note. Sending birthday cards along with well-wishes for the upcoming year shows donors that your organization values them. You’ll have greater success with this format if you stay focused on celebration and well-wishes, rather than making requests.

3) Donation Anniversary Cards
Send a card on the anniversary of a particularly large donation or on the anniversary of when the individual first became a donor. These cards generate a sense of family and partnership, showing donors that you value the relationship you share. Anniversary and birthday cards are especially appreciated by those who prefer more private acknowledgement for their support.
4) Social Media Shout-Outs
For donors who like public recognition, there’s nothing better than a social media shout-out. Post a special message and tag your donor. Shout-outs are fun, generate a sense of excitement, and encourage others to join in. Peer-to-peer sharing is also likely, since friends and family of the person being honored will want to spread the word. Share what motivated the donor to give and what they care about most. Learning more about your donors through this social media interaction will also inspire other donors and your fellow team members!

5) Donor Profiles in Newsletters
Donor profiles go even deeper than social media posts. In your organization’s newsletter, you have room to include more detail and use a variety of formats. Honor your donors by telling their story and sharing their journey that led them to your nonprofit. Include details on your donors’ personal interests that bring their stories to life.

6) Personal Thank You Videos
While videos intended for mass viewing are an excellent fundraising tool, personal one-to-one thank you videos are a great way to make donors feel special. You don’t need expensive equipment to create personal thank you videos. Many smartphones can record quality video and have built-in video editing tools available. If your organization has access to a Mac computer, iMovie allows your creativity to soar, making video editing with various effects easy.

7) Handwritten Notes From Those You Serve
Few types of thank yous are as effective as handwritten notes from people in the community you serve. These notes show genuine appreciation and create impact. A donor is more likely to keep a handwritten note, and reading about the impact of their gift can stir continued support.

8) Thank You Party
While formal galas tend to be very expensive, an informal thank you party can be just as effective. Choose a theme, plan activities, and purchase creative, affordable food that matches the theme. Parties are the perfect way for donors to meet one another, share their enthusiasm for the work you’re doing together, and make new friends.

9) Meet-the-Team Event
Relationships grow stronger when people meet face-to-face. Many of your donors will welcome the opportunity to meet your team, get to know them, and enjoy a fun time together. Whether it’s an informal luncheon or coffee, a picnic, or simply a tour of your office, the possibilities for meet-the-team events are endless. While it would be impossible to invite all donors to an event like this simply due to logistics, you can use them as a fantastic way to thank long-term regular donors, major donors, or program-specific donors.

10) Project Photo Book
Everyone loves photographs. Project photo books don’t have to be professionally-produced, either. Creating a photo album is easier than ever through online sites like Shutterfly, or even making an electronic one on social media. In your photo book, include images of the project from beginning through completion. Share photos of the people or animals who have been helped by the project. These books should be compelling, inspiring donors to continue their partnership with you.