Thank you notes were one of the most common types of letters that appeared in 18th-century letter writing manuals. Thank you notes, whether handwritten or sent as an e-mail, are still common today.

Check out these three letter templates. Partner with a family member or friend. Ask them to provide a word to fill in the blank spaces based on the parts of speech listed below the line. Fill it in, and when complete, read them aloud.

A Letter of Thanks for a Seal (18th century)

This letter is adapted from the sample “Letter of Thanks for a Seal” from The Art of Letter-Writing (p. 66). Benjamin Franklin owned a copy of this book. It is a thank you note for a seal, which was used to stick wax to a letter to keep it closed and private. This was before envelopes were used!

Dear _____________________,

honorific

The seal you sent me is the __________________ thing I ever saw, and I am vexed superlative adjective

I cannot praise it sufficiently. But, let me tell you, that the ________________ who person

would seal up their _______________’s mouth, because not very reserved in keeping relation/family member

their secrets, ought to have had such a _______________ seal, to be worthy of so adjective

nice an application. The most excellent engravers are botchers to yours; nay, I may say, ________________’s pencil never delineated any _______________ favorite author’s name noun

with the art and delicacy of your figures. But as I do not so much regard your present as a masterpiece in its kind, than as a pledge of your friendship, I cannot thank you enough for it nor express to what a degree I am, &c. ______________________. name
Benjamin Franklin’s Letter of Thanks for an Electrical Tube (March 14, 1747)

This letter is adapted from an actual letter of thanks that Franklin wrote to his friend, Peter Collinson, who lived in London. Collinson sent Franklin and his colleagues at the Library Company of Philadelphia an electrical tube with descriptions of experiments to be performed with it. You can see the actual letter printed here, in Franklin’s *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* (pp. 1-2).

_________________,

honorific

Your _______________________ present of an electric tube, with directions for

adjective

using it, has put several of us on making _____________________, in which we

plural noun

have _______________________, some _________________________

verb (not ending in -ing) adjective

phenomena that we look upon to be new. I shall, therefore, communicate them to

you in my next letter, though possibly they may not be new to you, as among the

numbers daily employed in those experiments on your side of the water, ‘tis probable

someone or other has hit on the same observations. For my own part, I never was

before engaged in any study that so ___________________ engrossed my attention

adverb

and my _________________________ as this has lately done; for what with making

noun

________________________ when I can be alone, and repeating them to my

noun

Friends and __________________________, who, from the

noun

____________________ of the thing, come continually in crowds to see them, I

adjective

have, during some _____________________ past, had little leisure for anything else.

length of time

I am, &c. B. Franklin.
A Letter of Thanks for a Mask (2020)

This is a template that might be used to write a thank you note today. Many people are sending masks to loved ones to wear during the pandemic. Here’s an example of a letter you might write thanking someone for their gift. This is adapted from the 18th century letter of thanks for a seal.

Dear _____________________,

The mask you sent me is the __________________________ thing I ever saw, and I superlative adjective
am _____________________ I cannot praise it ______________________. But let adjective adverb
me tell you that any _________________________ who would cover their person
_______________________’s mouth, because not careful in keeping isolated, should family member
have such a __________________________ mask. The most adjective
_______________________ designers are _____________________ to yours. No, I may negative noun
say, _________________________ never created any ______________________ with favorite artist noun
the _________________ and art of your creation. But as I think of your present as a noun
sign of your friendship, rather than as a masterpiece, I cannot thank you enough.

_________________________, _____________________
closing name