

Thank-you letter do's and don'ts

Bloorview Research Institute Trainee Executive (BRITE)

Thanking a participant for their contributions is a critical part of research. Thank-you letters express to participants that their time is valued and their contributions are meaningful. The Bloorview Research Institute Trainee Executive (BRITE) aimed to create a guideline, informed by youth opinions, to help researchers appropriately and respectfully thank participants. BRITE partnered with the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to review existing thank-you letters and drew from them to create the following guidelines. This document lists youth-approved suggestions to make thank-you letters meaningful and personalized, such that participants feel appreciated and remain interested in future research opportunities.

DO	DON'T	EXAMPLES
<input type="checkbox"/> Address the participant by name or second person pronoun (i.e. you)	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't address participant as "participant" at any point in the letter	<input type="checkbox"/> "Dear [participant's name]" <input type="checkbox"/> "Then, we asked <i>you</i> to..."
<input type="checkbox"/> Include "thank you" in first sentence	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't wait until the end to say "thank you"	"Dear [participant's name], Thank you for..."
<input type="checkbox"/> Include an electronic signature from the PI at the end of the letter		
<input type="checkbox"/> Include logos of the BRI, Holland Bloorview, and your lab (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't include logos of granting agencies	
<input type="checkbox"/> Include a summary of what the research team was able to achieve because of that participant's involvement		<input type="checkbox"/> "Because of <i>you</i> , we found _____." <input type="checkbox"/> "Because <i>you</i> did _____ we are now able to do _____."
<input type="checkbox"/> Include headings with information (and enough detail for participants to remember what they did)		<input type="checkbox"/> Sections may be named "background", "rationale", "what will we do next", etc...
<input type="checkbox"/> Make the letter sound like a personalized card	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't make it sound like an academic abstract <input type="checkbox"/> Don't use acronyms or academic jargon	
<input type="checkbox"/> Target the readability to the grade level of your youngest participants		<input type="checkbox"/> If your study age range is 6-12 years, the readability should be grade 1
<input type="checkbox"/> Use visuals to support content (ensure that visuals match words!)	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't have only words, or only have pictures	<input type="checkbox"/> Tailor visuals/content balance to the age (more visuals for younger participants and more content for older ones)
<input type="checkbox"/> Include details on how to stay involved in research		<input type="checkbox"/> Include contact details and lab website (if applicable)