

The holiday season is traditionally the time Americans choose to thank those who provide them with year-round services. In these tough economic times it's important to remember that holiday tipping is truly about saying thank you. With a little creativity you can accommodate everyone on your list this year without blowing your budget.

**Here are some things to consider when you're deciding how to thank people, who you will spend money on, and how much you will spend:**



Your budget: First and foremost, you shouldn't feel obligated to go beyond your personal budget.

- If your budget does not allow for tips, consider homemade gifts; and if you're not good with crafts or in the kitchen, remember that words are always a great way to express your thanks for a year of good service.
- Any gift or tip should always be accompanied by a short handwritten note of appreciation. (Two or three sentences will be enough.)
- Do you already tip regularly? If you tip at the time of service, you may forego an end of the year tip, or give a more modest holiday thank you. You may also choose to give a small gift instead.
- The quality and frequency of the service you receive.
- Your relationship with the service provider.
- Location: Tipping averages tend to be higher in larger cities.
- Length of service: The number of years you've been using the service.
- Regional customs.
- Type of establishment: Is it deluxe or moderate?
- When in doubt, ask: Call the front desk and ask what is 1) accepted by the company, and 2) typical for what they see from other customers.
- Common sense, specific circumstances and holiday spirit should always be your guide.
- Don't buy into the thought that if you don't tip you won't get good service for the coming year. If you think you've had bad service for this reason, you might want to consider changing companies or speaking directly with a manager.

### **Holiday Thanking Recommendations**

The table below contains our recommendations for holiday thanking, or tipping. These are not

rules. Remember that averages and ranges can vary based on the type of establishment, regional customs, and your own budget. You never have to give cash and a gift, except in a few cases, such as when your child may give a gift to a babysitter in addition to your tip or thank-you. (Read more on the difference between [a holiday tip and a holiday gift](#) .) We understand that some people aren't comfortable picking out gifts for those they don't know well so there are cash amounts listed below, as a suggestion only.

### Service Provider

### Options

### Suggested Amount or Gift

Au pair or live-in nanny

Cash or consider a gift. This person works closely with your family and you probably know them well.

Up to one week's pay and a gift from your child(ren).

Regular babysitter

Cash

Up to one evening's pay and a small gift from your child(ren).

Day care provider

Cash or a gift for each staff member who works with your child(ren).

A gift from you or \$25-\$70 for each staff member who works with your child(ren) and a small gift from you

Live-in help (nanny, cook, butler, housekeeper)

Cash and a personal gift

Up to one week to one month of pay as a cash tip, plus a gift from you.

Private nurse

Gift

A thoughtful gift from you.

Home health employees

Check with agency first about gifts or tipping policies. If there is a no gifts/tipping policy, consider a donation.

A thoughtful gift from you. (If gift-giving is not against company policy.)

Housekeeper/Cleaner

Cash and/or a gift

Up to the amount of one week's pay and/or a small gift.

Nursing home employees

A gift (not cash). Check company policy first.

A gift that could be shared by the staff (flowers or food items).

Barber

Cash or gift

Up to the cost of one haircut or a gift.

Beauty salon staff

Cash or gift depending on whether you tip well after each service.

Up to the cost of one salon visit divided for each staff member who works with you. Give individual cards

Personal trainer

Cash or gift

Up to the cost of one session or a gift.

Massage therapist

Cash or gift

Up to the cost of one session or a gift.

Pet groomer

Cash or gift (if the same person grooms your pet all year).

Up to the cost of one session or a gift.

Dog walker

Cash or gift

Up to one week's pay or a gift.

Personal caregiver

Cash or gift

Up to one week to one month's salary or a gift.

Pool cleaner

Cash or gift

Up to the cost of one cleaning to be split among the crew.

Garage attendants

Cash or small gift

\$10-30 or a small gift

Newspaper delivery person

Cash or small gift

\$10-30 or a small gift

Mail carrier

Small gift only

Please see below for a detailed description of the United States Postal Service's gift regulations.\*

Package deliverer

Small gift only, no cash. (Only if you receive regular deliveries.)

Small gift in the \$20 range. Most delivery companies discourage or prohibit cash gifts.

Superintendent

Cash or gift

\$20-80 or a gift

Doorman

Cash or gift

\$15-80. \$15 or more each for multiple doormen, or a gift.

Elevator operator

Cash or gift

\$15-40 each

Handyman

Cash or gift

\$15 to \$40

Trash/Recycling collectors



Cash or gift (for private) check city regulations if it is a municipal service.

\$10-30 each

Yard/Garden worker

Cash or gift

\$20-50 each

\*United States Postal Service Gift Regulations:

**Mail carriers working for the United States Postal Service are allowed to accept the following items:**

- Snacks and beverages or perishable gifts that are not part of a meal.
- Small gifts that have little intrinsic value (travel mugs, hand warmers, etc...) and are clearly no more than a token of appreciation.
- Perishable items clearly worth more (large fruit baskets or cookie tins) must be shared with the entire household.

**Mail carriers working for the United States Postal Service may not accept the following:**

- Cash gifts, checks, gift cards, or any other form of currency.