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# News To Move You Forward

Brought to you by Jill Scheppler, Bob McManus & Angie Domine

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## Thank-You Cards: Still in Style or Needless Paperwork?

Fewer people may be sending handwritten notes these days, but thank-you cards still haven't gone out of style. At least they shouldn't, according to etiquette experts.

While it can be confusing trying to figure out the "proper" way to communicate in various situations, there are some agreed-upon guidelines for how to send your thanks. For example, gifts received at parties generally warrant a handwritten thank-you note. Think birthday parties (for both children and adults), bridal or baby showers, and anniversaries. Another rule of thumb: if you received a gift in the mail or a gift that wasn't opened in front of the giver, your best bet is to send a written note. The same goes if you've received something that has been made specifically for you. Lastly, if you've been treated to a kindness or gift during a difficult time, like an illness, death, or hospitalization, then you should absolutely express your gratitude with a handwritten note.

For gifts given during the holidays or "just because," a verbal thank-you is perfectly fine, especially as you most likely opened the presents in front of the giver. But is it ever okay to send just an email? Of course! Thank-you emails are perfectly acceptable in work situations and when you don't have a person's physical address. They're also more than enough if you want to thank someone for a small kindness, like a neighbor picking up your newspaper.

At the end of the day, though, what matters most is that we all remain generous with our gratitude. Being thankful will never go out of style.

## Thinking of Buying a Home? Get My Free Guide



Buying a home is a complex process with many factors to consider.

Prepare for the decisions you'll need to make along the way by requesting my free report, "10 Easy Steps to Buying a Home."

Just call me at 715-387-1122 and I'll send it right out to you.

## Five Quick Staging Tips for a Faster Home Sale

Staging your home prepares your property for potential buyers so you can achieve a faster sale. Professional stagers and your real estate agent can help with this task. If you're under a time crunch, use these simple staging tips to quickly get your home ready for viewing.

**Declutter everything:** All that "stuff" gets in the way of buyers seeing what your home has to offer. If you don't have time for a full house purge, at least make sure all surfaces are clear and closets are neatly organized. Remember, you want your home to appear spacious, not crowded.

**Spruce up the entry:** Make a good first impression. Sweep the front porch. Clean outdoor furniture. Add a doormat and some potted plants. Keep the entry and walkway well-lit.

**Rearrange furniture:** You might be surprised at how easily you can transform your home with a little rearranging. Place furniture in symmetrical arrangements. Create inviting conversation areas. If you have a spare room that has become a catch-all, set it up as usable space. Arrange it as a guest room or office, so buyers see the room's potential.

**Clean from top to bottom:** Your home should sparkle. If you have a lot of square footage to cover, consider having your home professionally cleaned. It will be worth the investment when buyers fall in love with your pristine space.

**Minimize odors:** Before showings, run some orange rinds through the garbage disposal. Remove odors in furniture and carpets with a dash of baking soda; let it sit for 10 minutes, then vacuum. Heat a pot of water and a couple cinnamon sticks on the stove for an hour to add a pleasing aroma to your space.

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## Downsizing Prep: Common Heirloom Errors

The kids have all moved out. As you approach retirement, you know downsizing is in your future. It's time to start considering what that will entail.

Realistically, you won't have room in your new home for everything that has accumulated over the past two or three decades. Don't make the same mistakes many downsizers do by holding on to items that should be purged.

Before it's time to move, take stock of what is in your home. Have you kept anything for your kids that they really don't want? Have an open conversation with your children to determine whether what you consider a precious family heirloom would simply be clutter in your child's home. Put the following items at the top of the list to discuss. These are three of the most common things parents keep that their kids would prefer never to inherit.

**Books:** Even if your children love to read, it's likely they don't want your old books (and they probably have their own growing collection they will have to purge some day). If you suspect any of your books are

valuable, do a search online or contact a book antiquarian. Otherwise, consider donating the books to a library or used book store.

**Fine dinnerware:** Has your child ever used a cup and saucer for morning coffee? Would he or she use silver flatware? For that matter, have *you* used any of these dishes in the past year? Children and grandchildren typically don't want to store multiple place settings of porcelain dishes. Go ahead and sell them to the consignment shop or to a company that offers replacement pieces for consumers seeking specific patterns.

**Paper piles:** Do you have shoeboxes of greeting cards, letters, and photos stashed under your bed? Piles of paper are overwhelming and nearly impossible for others to sort through.

Before downsizing, go through these papers and say goodbye. Read through cards once more; then recycle them. Scan photos to create digital files, or frame your favorites to pass along. Then get rid of the rest.

### Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

*How long does it take to buy a home?*

Home buyers can expect their purchase to take between 30 and 45 days from the time their offer is accepted to the closing date. This is the average time span for normal market conditions.

Of course, there are exceptions. Some buyers are able to get a deal together in less time if they are well-prepared and encounter no issues.

At other times, in hot markets, the high sales activity may slow down the process. Lenders may be swamped with transactions they are trying to push through underwriting. Inspectors and appraisers may have longer lead times for appointments.

Each delay of a day or two can extend the entire process an extra week or more. Your real estate agent can inform you about the current market conditions in your area, so you can plan your home search and your move accordingly.

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**News To Move You Forward is brought to you free by:**

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