

Thank-you letter do's and don'ts

Bloorview Research Institute Trainee Executive (BRITE)

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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. Thank you letters templates must be approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) and the letters sent prior to study closure with the REB.

DO	DON'T	EXAMPLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Address the participant by name or second person pronoun (i.e. you) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Don't address participant as "participant" at any point in the letter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> "Dear [participant's name]" <input type="checkbox"/> "Then, we asked <i>you</i> to..."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Include "thank you" in first sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Don't wait until the end to say "thank you" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> "Dear [participant's name], Thank you for..."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Include an electronic signature from the PI at the end of the letter 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Include logos of the BRI, Holland Bloorview, and your lab (if applicable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Don't include logos of granting agencies 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Include a summary of what the research team was able to achieve because of that participant's involvement 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> "Because of <i>you</i>, we found _____." <input type="checkbox"/> "Because <i>you</i> did _____, we are not able to do _____."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Include headings with information (and enough detail for participants to remember what they did) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sections may be named "background", "rationale", "what we will do next", etc...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make the letter sound like a personalized card 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Don't make it sound like an academic abstract <input type="checkbox"/> Don't use acronyms or academic jargon 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Target the readability to the grade level of your youngest participants 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If your study age range is 6-12 years, the readability should be grade 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use visuals to support content (ensure that visuals match words!) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have only words, or only have pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tailor visuals/content balance to the age (more visuals for younger participants and more content for older ones)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Include details on how to stay involved in 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Include contact details and lab website (if

research		applicable)
<input type="checkbox"/> Include details on how the participant can access the lab's webpage to see the publication once available.		<input type="checkbox"/> Include the lab publication webpage link. If possible, include an approximate timeframe when it will be published