



Don't forget to show your appreciation for service providers at holiday time

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By Tim Grant / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Anyone who performs a regular service for you or your family and does a fantastic job -- at least most of the time -- probably deserves and expects a little something extra during the holidays.

Even if you are low on cash, other great ways to say thank you could be a card, a handmade gift or a yummy batch of cookies.

"If you've lost your job or suffered a health issue that's keeping you from spending what you'd like to be spending, don't put more pressure on yourself," said April Masini, an etiquette expert based in Naples, Fla. "Simply say, 'I wish I could do more, but wanted to acknowledge how much I appreciate ...' and fill in the blank in person or in a card.

"A small box of chocolates, a demi-split of wine or champagne, a luscious single pomegranate, or a small bottle of cologne or a candle are all fine to tip or gift in lieu of cash when the cash is tight."

Still, the holiday tip is one of the more common ways to show appreciation, and there are a lot of people who might deserve one -- the hairdresser, the babysitter, the gardener, the manicurist and the newspaper delivery person.

The question is how much to give.

"Holiday tipping is often very confusing for a lot of people," said Lizzie Post, great-great granddaughter of Emily Post and spokeswoman for the Emily Post Institute in Burlington, Vt. "People are unsure of who to tip and how much to tip."

Emily Post, who died in 1960, was an author famous for her writings on the subject of etiquette, and her great-great granddaughter co-authored the 18th edition of Emily Post's Etiquette. Lizzie Post has even partnered with Bank of America to promote its mobile banking app to help people remember who to tip.

"It makes things just a little bit easier," Ms. Post said. "A lot of people around the holidays forget to give out their tips and what I like about this app is it allows you to set alerts.

"Tipping is a way to show appreciation for the weekly or daily working relationship you have with this person," she said. "You might not see your garbage man ever. But he is an important service person in your life. Therefore he is someone you want to make sure knows he is appreciated."

Although salaries and the cost of living vary from one geographic area to another, Ms. Post said it has for a long time been customary to base a holiday tip on the cost of one service or one week's pay. She said the Emily Post Institute pays attention each year to other tipping surveys and reporting in the media to give a suggested tip range.

"To be honest, they don't tend to change much year to year," she said. "Part of our job is to remind people to keep the focus on showing appreciation if the budget for tipping isn't there, and to explain the best ways to do that."

The mobile banking app can send money to a recipient, but Ms. Post doesn't recommend tipping that way. The sender would need the receiver's email address or cell phone number, which is personal information. A monetary holiday tip also should come with a card, she said.

It's important to remember there are some people who perform important services, but cannot accept cash during the holidays or any other time of the year. Those include school teachers, medical care givers and postal workers. Instead, they might appreciate homemade baked goods, artwork for the classroom or perhaps a fruit basket a medical professional could share with co-workers.

Tips for holiday tipping

Au Pair or live-in nanny	One week's pay and a gift from your child(ren).
Regular babysitter	One evening's pay and a small gift from your child(ren).
Day care provider	A gift from you or \$25-70 for each staff member and a small gift from your child(ren).
Live-in help (nanny, personal chef, butler, housekeeper)	One week to one month of pay as a cash tip, plus a gift from you.
Housekeeper/cleaner	Up to the amount of one week's pay and/or a small gift.
Barber	Cost of one haircut or a gift.
Beauty salon staff	The cost of one salon visit divided for each staff member who work with you. Give individual cards or a small gift each for those who work on you.
Personal trainer	Up to the cost of one session or a gift.
Massage therapist	Up to the cost of one session or a gift.
Pet groomer	Up to the cost of one session or a gift.
Dog walker	Up to one week's pay or a gift.
Personal caregiver	Between one week to one month's salary or a gift.
Pool cleaner	The cost of one cleaning to be split among the crew.
Garage attendants	\$10-30 or a small gift.
Newspaper delivery person	\$10-30 or a small gift.
Mail carrier	A small gift that is below \$20 in value or a perishable gift, as mail carriers cannot accept any form of currency, including cash gifts, checks or gift cards.
Package deliverer	Small gift in the \$20 range. Most delivery companies discourage or prohibit cash gifts.
Superintendent	\$20-80 or a gift.
Doorman	\$15-80, \$15 or more each for multiple doormen or a gift.
Elevator operator	\$15-40 each or a gift.
Handyman	\$15-40 each or a gift.
Trash/recycling collectors	\$10-30 each. Check city regulations if it is a municipal service.
Gardener	\$20-50 each or gift.
Private nurse	A thoughtful gift from you.
Home health employees	A thoughtful gift from you. Check with agency first about gifts or tipping policies. If there is a no gifts/tipping policy, consider a donation to the agency.
Nursing home employees	A gift that could be shared by the staff (flowers or food items). Check company policy first.

Source: The Emily Post Institute

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