

# Your Ultimate Tipping Guide



By Geoff Williams | U.S.News & World Report LP - Sat, May 25, 2013 10:19 AM EDT

What you think about tipping probably depends on your viewpoint on the world - whether you've worked in a service job that only paid well if you received tips, whether you have a lot of money, whether you don't. You may tip out of due diligence, but get no pleasure or pain from it. You may loathe the very concept of paying extra for a service and never tip. Or you may feel good about tipping, and see it as a way to pay it forward and keep the economy's engine humming.

Wherever you stand, if you're wondering who to pay and how much, here are our tips on tipping.

**Tipping at a restaurant.** If you're really pleased with your service, most experts will tell you to tip 20 percent. If you think the service was bad but not terrible, put down 10 percent. If you think the service was abominable, you can feel good about not leaving a tip.

*More to consider.* Restaurants often include gratuity at out. But in some cities, restaurants automatically tack on a tip no matter how many people are at the table. In Miami Beach, Fla., it's customary for many bars and restaurants to add a tip, as Alison Thompson, an account manager at a communications firm in San Francisco discovered this month when she flew to the city for a wedding.

## **[See It Isn't a Rumor: Some Restaurants Have Secret Menus.]**

Thompson and her husband dined at local restaurants during their weekend stay and were struck by the 18 percent gratuity added to their bill. "I was surprised - you typically only see that with larger parties, and it's called out to you by the waiter or waitress," Thompson says. She just happened to check the bill and realized the tip was already there. As it was, she left a little extra on the table anyway. "Our waitress was great," she says.

**Tipping when traveling.** April Masini, a columnist who writes "Ask April" at AskApril.com, says despite her focus on relationship advice, she gets a lot of etiquette questions and, over time, has compiled a lengthy list of what's appropriate to tip.

So if you're on a vacation this summer, according to Masini, you could do worse than follow her cheat sheet:

- Airport or train porter: \$1-2 per bag
- Airport wheelchair assistance: \$3-5 upon arrival at the gate
- Cab drivers: 10-18 percent of the fare, depending on the speed of the cab, your comfort level and how safe you feel during the drive, Masini says.
- Courtesy shuttle drivers: \$1-2 per bag
- Hotel bell staff: \$1-2 per bag
- Hotel concierge: \$10-20 depending on request, at departure

- Hotel doorman: no tip, Masini says, unless they handle luggage or call a cab
- Hotel maid: \$2-3 per night
- Parking valet: \$3-5 at pickup
- Restaurant host/hostess: Tipping isn't necessary, according to Masini, unless you're grateful because the host or hostess was able to secure a table for you that you otherwise wouldn't have been able to get.

*More to consider:* "As a frequent business traveler, I'm often faced with the dilemma of how to reward really great service," says Rich Teplitsky, a marketing communications consultant in Spring Branch, Texas. "Most companies I've worked for have a strict 15 percent - no more - tipping policy for work/travel-related tipping. In fact, I've had expense reports rejected when I tried to submit receipts with 17 percent or more tip."

Teplitsky's solution? If he feels the service is excellent, he'll tip the limit his company will allow and then contribute a few extra bucks out of his own pocket.

**What to tip when you're trying to look better.** Getting a haircut? Doing your nails? Masini has another cheat sheet:

- Barber or beautician: 15-20 percent of your total
- Beautician: 15-20 percent
- Manicurist/pedicurist: 15-20 percent
- Massage therapist: 20 percent
- Personal trainer: No tipping because you're paying a personal trainer, who is usually self-employed, for his or her expertise, but a gift at the holidays is a nice idea.
- Stylist or colorist: 15-20 percent

*More to consider.* There will probably always be a debate over whether you should tip the owner of a beauty salon. Adriana Hernandez, a 31-year-old in San Antonio who has had her own salon for the past five years, thinks you should.

**[Read: [How to Get Discounts on Salon and Spa Services.](#)]**

"I've been told to my face that I'm an owner, so I don't get tips," Hernandez says. But in her case, she is also the owner and her own employee. The best rule of thumb here: Use your own judgment. If you're at a sizeable salon with a lot of employees and the owner does your hair, you're probably on sound ethical ground not giving a tip, and if you feel uncomfortable, you can always ask.

If you're the customer of a smaller salon with one or two employees, keep in mind that much of what you pay isn't going directly to the owner but to the owner's landlord, the utilities, the vendor who supplies the hair products and so on.

**What to tip just about everywhere else.** Life and being a consumer in general, if you haven't noticed, is expensive. If you'd like to take a gander at what you're expected to tip random service people you may encounter, here's the consensus from a variety of sources on tipping.

- Bartender: \$1-2 for each drink
- Car wash attendant: \$3-5 at pickup
- Dog groomer: \$10

- Grocery store bagger: Many grocery stores have a policy not to tip the bagger. If a bagger carries your groceries out to the car, you may want to offer a buck or two, however.
- Furniture delivery people: \$5 to even \$10 per worker, depending on how heavy the item is.
- Movers: If a moving-company team is hauling your furniture in, many experts suggest tipping 5 percent of your total payment, but this isn't a science. Many movers don't expect a tip or simply aren't tipped by tip-weary or tip-oblivious consumers. They'll likely be happy if you at least offer them some water or a soda.
- Housecleaning/maid service: According to [www.itipping.com](http://www.itipping.com), a website all about tips, if you have a regular maid service, you can forgo tips but holiday gifts are a nice touch.
- Tattoo artists: 10-20 percent is generally expected.
- Tow truck drivers: \$3-5, even if your car insurance or AAA is footing the bill, experts say.
- Shoe shiner: \$2-3

*More to consider.* Tipping norms vary by region, occupation and organization, says Holona Ochs, a political science professor at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Penn., who co-authored the book, "Gratuity: A Contextual Understanding of Tipping Norms from The Perspective of Tipped Employees." "Any time someone is unsure about tipping standards, I recommend a friendly conversation with the person who might receive the tip," Ochs says.

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But people tip mostly for social and emotional reasons, she says. If Ochs is right, if you learn your waiter's life story, and he's a college sophomore who reminds you of you or your college-aged son or daughter, you're more likely to give him a bigger tip than the single mom working in a restaurant - unless, of course, you're a single mom.

In short, you're probably not tipping to reward good service or, as Ochs points out, people who meet your social expectations. In other words, we tip "because we don't want to be thought of as jerks," Ochs says.

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