



UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA



GREEN
& GOLD
STARS

PEER RECOGNITION:

A Simple Guide to Helping Each Other Thrive

Why Your Voice Matters

Recognition is about much more than saying ‘thanks’—it’s how we look after one another and keep our community strong. It’s our way of bringing the university’s four core values to life, turning them from words on a page into the way we treat each other every day. When you notice and name how a colleague lives these values, you’re doing more than just showing appreciation; you’re actively building the kind of place we all want to work.

As a peer, you see the small, helpful things that bosses might miss—like fixing a quick problem or helping someone out behind the scenes. By sharing your appreciation, you show your coworkers that their hard work truly matters. You don’t need a fancy title to make someone feel like they belong.

HOW TO SAY 'THANKS'

The 3-Step Plan

Keep it simple. Use these steps to turn a quick “thanks” into a meaningful message.



Step	Question to Ask Yourself	Example
Action	What specifically did they do?	"You jumped in to troubleshoot the projector issues 5 minutes before my lecture..."
Impact	How did it help me or the team?	"...this allowed the class to start on time and kept the students engaged..."
Value	What university value does this show?	"...I really appreciate your reliability and quick thinking under pressure."

Examples: Vague vs. Meaningful

Sharing the small details makes your thanks feel real.

Instead of...	Try saying...
"Thanks for the help."	"Thank you for organizing those files. It saved me an hour of searching and let me focus on the grant proposal."
"Great job in the meeting."	"I appreciated how you voiced that concern about student equity. It sparked a necessary conversation we might have missed."
"You're amazing."	"The way you send those weekly updates helps everyone stay on the same page. It's such a relief to know we can count on you."

Checklist for Thoughtful Praise

Before sending that email or speaking up, take a quick pause to consider the following:



Is it timely?

Am I recognizing the action/behaviour close to when it happened?



Is it inclusive?

Am I only recognizing the people I sit next to, or am I noticing the “quiet work” done by others (e.g., support staff, remote colleagues)?



Is it authentic?

Do I truly mean it, or am I just trying to keep up appearances?



Is it preferred?

Does this person like public praise (team meeting) or would they prefer a private note?

RULES FOR REAL RECOGNITION

- **Be Quick:** Say thanks as soon as you can while the help is still fresh in everyone’s mind.
- **Be Specific:** Say exactly what they did and how it helped so they know what you appreciated.
- **Be Yourself:** Talk like you normally do and be sincere; a simple “thank you” from the heart is better than a scripted one.
- **Be Steady:** Small, regular thank yous go a lot further than waiting for a big event to celebrate.



HELPFUL WAYS TO START

Use these ideas to help you say thanks in an email, a chat, or in person.

Noticing Specific Help

Use these when you want to be clear about what someone did and why it mattered.

- "I want to recognize you for ____; it made a real difference because ____."
- "The way you handled ____ directly contributed to ____."
- "I noticed how you ____, and that had a positive impact on ____."
- "Your work on ____ helped the team by ____."

Cheering on Someone's Skills

Use these to show how much you value the things they are naturally good at.

- "This really played to your strength in ____."
- "One of the things you regularly do well is ____, and I saw that again when you ____."
- "Your ability to ____ was especially valuable in this situation."
- "You bring a real talent for ____, and it showed in ____."

Recognizing Hard Work, Even When It's Tough

Use these when things are still in progress or when someone worked really hard on a difficult task.

- "I want to acknowledge the effort you put into ____, even though it was challenging."
- "You stayed committed to ____, and that persistence matters."
- "The progress you made on ____ is important and appreciated."
- "I saw how much work went into ____, and I want to recognize that."

Living Our Values Together

Use these to connect someone's actions back to what we all care about as a team.

- "This is a great example of our value of ____."
- "What you did reflects how we aim to work together, especially around ____."
- "Your approach to ____ really demonstrates our commitment to ____."
- "This is exactly how we want to treat each other here."

10 EASY WAYS TO THANK A COWORKER TODAY

Use these ideas to help you say thanks in an email, a chat, or in person.

- 1** **Share in a Meeting:** Mention someone's great work during a team chat. It helps others see the hard work that often goes unnoticed.
- 2** **The "CC" Email:** Send a thank you note and copy their supervisor so their boss knows they're doing a great job.
- 3** **The Virtual Award:** Start a fun tradition where a digital badge is passed around the team by coworkers to keep the momentum going.
- 4** **The Thank You Card:** Write a physical or kudos e-card; these serve as tangible keepsakes that colleagues often keep as reminders of their value.
- 5** **The Informal Drop-In:** Stop by a desk or send a quick chat just to say, "I saw what you did there, and it was great," making recognition feel genuine rather than transactional.
- 6** **The Chat Channel:** Use a Google Chat space for quick shout-outs with fun GIFs and emojis to celebrate small wins together.
- 7** **The Newsletter Highlight:** Suggest a coworker for a feature in a department update to let everyone know about their great contributions.
- 8** **The Physical Recognition Wall:** Post a sticky note on a shared whiteboard to turn a fleeting moment of praise into a lasting visual reminder for the whole unit.
- 9** **The Instant "Thank You" Call/Voicemail:** Leave a quick message to let someone know their work was important enough for you to stop and call; a voicemail is a "gold" artifact they can replay later.
- 10** **The Walk-and-Talk:** Invite a colleague for a stroll around campus to share feedback. Walking side-by-side can shift the dynamic to feel more authentic.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- **Check Preferences:** Does this person enjoy public praise in a meeting, or would they prefer a private email or note?
- **Notice the “Quiet Work”:** Make a conscious effort to recognize those in less visible roles who handle back-end processes or lab support.
- **Start Small:** If you feel awkward, start with a written note; sticking to the facts of “Action + Impact” helps the hesitation disappear.
- **Avoid the “Clique” Trap:** Be mindful of “buddy loops” and ensure you aren’t only recognizing the people sitting closest to you.
- **Be Sincere:** Authenticity creates a much larger impact than a “perfect” message—if you mean it, say it in your own voice.
- **Balance the Scales** Use your voice to highlight quiet contributors who handle essential back-end processes, not just the most visible “wins.”



WHERE TO FIND MORE HELP

For kudos e-cards and practical tools, and to learn more about building great recognition habits, head to the [Everyday Recognition](https://www.ualberta.ca/talentmanagement/) website or email the team at talent.management@ualberta.ca.