



**UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA**



**GREEN
& GOLD
STARS**

THE DAILY RECOGNITION TOOLKIT:

A Guide to Building Better Recognition Habits Together

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.

CHECKING IN: HOW ARE YOU DOING?

Think about what you've done over the last month and see how often these things happen.

1 = Never **2** = Rarely **3** = Sometimes **4** = Often **5** = Always

Go ahead and pick the number that feels most true for you. This is an optional, private check-in just for your own reflection—there's no need to share your scores with anyone unless you want to.

Statement	Rating (1-5)
I make sure to say thanks in a way that feels right for the person I'm talking to.	
I provide timely recognition that specifically references the behaviours or results being acknowledged.	
My way of showing appreciation helps people feel capable, valued, and happy to be here.	
I encourage everyone to notice and thank each other, not just wait for it to come from the top.	
I make an effort to be fair and inclusive when noticing everyone's hard work.	
My appreciation shows others what we care about and how we want to treat each other.	
I give honest thanks every day and also use official programs when the time is right.	
I foster a culture where individuals feel comfortable expressing recognition for one another.	
I use feedback and information from others to make our ways of saying thanks even better.	
I try to set a good example and help others learn how to show appreciation too.	

Total Rating	What it Means
41–50	Great job! You're making people feel really appreciated. Keep it up!
31–40	You're doing well. Just a few small changes could make things even better.
21–30	Sometimes people might feel missed. It's a good idea to try some new ways to say thanks.
10–20	There's a big chance to start making people feel much more valued here.

THE B.I.G. WAY: MORE THAN JUST “GOOD JOB”

Saying “good job” is nice, but it doesn’t always stick. To make appreciation meaningful, it helps to be specific. The B.I.G. way is just a simple approach to help. By taking a moment to explain why something mattered, you let people know exactly what they did that was so helpful.

The B.I.G. way (**Action, Why it helped, Keep it going**) is a clear way to give great thanks. It helps you stay focused on what actually happened so people know you really noticed them.



Focus	Action to Take	Example
B - Behaviour	Say exactly what you saw them do.	“You demonstrated strong teamwork by supporting a colleague with data formatting, ensuring they could finalize their report on time.”
I - Impact	Explain how that action helped everyone else.	“That enabled us to hit our deadline.”
G - Going-forward	Let them know you hope they keep doing it.	“Please keep doing that; it’s exactly what makes a great teammate.”

The B.I.G. way makes your message much more meaningful. It works better than vague praise because:

- **It feels real:** When you mention a specific thing someone did, they know you actually noticed them and aren’t just being polite.
- **It helps people grow:** When someone hears how they helped (“Because you finished that, we met the goal”), they know exactly what to do next time to be successful.

SIMPLE WAYS TO START

Use these when you're chatting, emailing, or meeting. Just use your normal voice—talk like you would to a friend.

Noticing Effort (When things are still in progress)

- "I wanted to say I see how hard you're working on this, even though it's been a bit of a climb."
- "You've stuck with this, and that really keeps everyone moving forward."
- "I can see the progress you're making and I really appreciate the work you're putting in."

Highlighting Strengths (What they do best)

- "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 Skill was exactly what we needed in this situation."

Connecting to Values (University culture)

- "That's a perfect example of being curious and helpful in action."
- "What you did really shows how we all want to work together."
- "The way you handled that shows you really care about the community we're building."

In Public or 1-on-1

- "I'd like to take a moment to recognize _____ for _____." (Public)
- "I want the team to hear about the impact _____ had by _____." (Public)
- "I wanted to check in and personally thank you for _____. It didn't go unnoticed." (Private)

Encouraging More of the Same

- "Please keep doing _____; it makes a massive difference to the workflow."
- "I hope you continue to bring this approach to _____ —it's a real asset."
- "This is something the team really benefits from—thank you for the hustle."

THE APPRECIATION MENU: 11 PRACTICAL IDEAS

1

The Shout-Out Round

- **Why it's great:** It helps us see the quiet work people do and makes everyone feel like they're on the same team.
- **How-To:** Take 5 minutes in a meeting for people to say thanks to each other.
- *Tip:* Use your turn to mention the people doing the quiet work behind the scenes who might get missed.

2

The Recognition Email (The "CC Power Move")

- **Why it's great:** A nice note is something someone can keep and look back on when they're having a tough day.
- **How-To:** Send a specific "Thank You" and cc: the individual's next-level manager to double the impact.
- *Tip:* Set aside a few minutes on Friday to send one note—it helps you remember the people who are always steady and reliable.

3

The Virtual Trophy Rotation

- **Why it's great:** It makes saying thanks fun and lets everyone join in.
- **How-To:** Use a digital badge or funny background that the current winner passes to a peer at the next meeting.
- *Tip:* Try to pick someone new each time so everyone gets a turn to feel special.

4

Handwritten or Kudos E-Cards

- **Why it's great:** A card shows you really took the time to think about them.
- **How-To:** Keep a box of blank cards in your desk or use the university's kudos e-cards.
- *Tip:* Keep a little list of who you've thanked so you don't accidentally miss anyone.

5

Checking In Personally

- **Why it's great:** Just being there shows people they matter. It makes things feel more like a community.
- **How-To:** Stop by just to say hello and see how people are doing, without needing anything from them.
- *Tip:* Make an effort to reach out to people who work further away or are working from home.

6

Peer Kudos Boards

- **Why it's great:** It makes it easy for everyone to share a bit of positivity.
- **How-To:** Set up a Google Chat channel like #team-kudos and seed it with the first few entries yourself.
- *Tip:* If things are quiet, just ask a simple question like "Who helped you out this week?"

7

Newsletter Spotlights

- **Why it's great:** It lets more people hear about the great things happening and celebrates success.
- **How-To:** Run a "Mini-Interview" with an employee about a recent win in the monthly department email.
- *Tip:* Always check if the person is okay with being mentioned publicly first.

8

Physical Recognition Walls

- **Why it's great:** It creates a nice visual reminder of how much we all help each other.
- **How-To:** Use a whiteboard in a high-traffic area; keep sticky notes and markers nearby for easy posting.
- *Tip:* Put up notes for people working from home so they feel included in the office too.

9

Quick "Thank You" Calls

- **Why it's great:** Hearing a friendly voice feels much more personal than an email.
- **How-To:** Call for a minute just to say thanks. Don't ask for anything else while you're on the phone.
- *Tip:* If someone might be surprised by a call, send a quick text first to let them know you're just calling to say thanks.

10

Walk-and-Talk Recognition

- **Why it's great:** Walking together feels more like a partnership and less like a formal meeting.
- **How-To:** Ask someone for a quick walk around the block or have a phone-only walk with someone at home.
- *A Tip:* Be mindful of what works for everyone and offer other ways to catch up, like over a coffee.

11

Bravo Awards (Using the B.I.G. way)

- **Why it's great:** It makes a clear link between doing something great and feeling appreciated for it.
- **How-To:** When you notice someone being helpful, make a quick note or certificate to say thank you.
- *A Tip:* If you mention you're going to send a thank you note or award, make sure you actually do it.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- **Be Quick:** Try saying thanks as soon as you can while the help is still fresh in everyone's mind.
- **Be Specific:** It helps to 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.



SOLVING COMMON PROBLEMS WHAT IF YOU'RE STUCK?

Problem	What to Do
I feel a bit shy about saying thanks in person.	Start with a written note. It lets you think about what you want to say and keeps things focused on the helpful thing they did.
We work from home; I don't see everything everyone is doing.	Notice the things you can see, like helpful emails or good meeting habits. If you're not sure how they did something, just ask: "How did you handle this?" and they'll tell you about the effort they put in.
I don't want anyone to feel left out.	Just try to be consistent and notice when anyone does something helpful. Look for the small, quiet contributions from everyone, not just the people who are loudest or closest to you.
I'm not sure if people are actually liking the way we say thanks.	Just ask everyone directly: "How do you feel we're doing with noticing each other's hard work?" Their answers will help you know what to do next.
I'm too busy to find things to praise.	It's just about building a habit. Take a few minutes on Friday to send one quick email or ask in a chat who helped make someone's week easier.



WHERE TO FIND MORE HELP

For more helpful ideas and notes you can use, check out the [Everyday Recognition](https://www.ualberta.ca/talentmanagement/) website.

Need some help? Just email the Talent Management team at talent.management@ualberta.ca if you'd like a hand with building these habits into your day.