Goodwill messages are special messages. Unlike good news messages that say "yes" to the reader related to business, goodwill messages are meant to build goodwill. These messages are always appreciated.

Goodwill messages are very nice letters to receive because they often come as a pleasant surprise. Unlike good news letters that give positive news related to business, goodwill letters build relationships.

Do not use the letter to make a sales pitch. The purpose of these letters is to build goodwill without any hidden business scheme. So a goodwill message thanking a customer for his/her business would NOT include an announcement about an upcoming sale.

Finding the right words to express feelings is sometimes more difficult than writing ordinary messages. A ready-made card, even one that's well designed and attractive, simple does not have the same emotional impact as a personalized letter.

Dr. Mary Ellen Guffey, best-selling author, recommends these five S’s of Goodwill Messages:

1. **Be selfless.** Focus on the reader, not on the sender. A sincere thank you to a customer should not include a notice of an upcoming sale.

2. **Be specific.** Instead of vague statements (You did a good job), include special details (Your strategy for approaching customers proved to be outstanding).

3. **Be sincere.** Show your honest feelings with conversational, everyday language.

4. **Be spontaneous.** Strive to make the message natural, fresh and direct. Avoid canned phrases (If I may be of service, please do not hesitate...)

5. **Be short.** Goodwill messages are fairly brief.

Begin your letters effectively. Because goodwill letters express the writer's feelings, these are the only letters that permit you to begin with "I" or "We." The most effective beginning is still one that expresses the YOU-ATTITUDE. End with a specific polite closure. Avoid "contact" when "call me" or "email me" are more precise.
Appreciation Letters:

a. As appropriate, express your pride in the reader’s accomplishment or state how the reader deserves the honor without being gushy.

b. Cover three points in gift thank-you’s

1. identify the gift,
2. tell why you appreciate it, and
3. explain how you will use it.

c. Be sincere in sending thanks for a favor or for hard work. Tell what the favor means to you. Avoid superlatives and gushiness. Maintain credibility with sincere, simple statements.

d. Tell how the favor, action or donation helped you accomplish your goals. For example, "Thanks to your donation, we were able to purchase 10 turkeys for Thanksgiving meals. Your donation helped feed over 100 hungry people."

e. Offer praise in expressing thanks for hospitality. Compliment, as appropriate:

1. fine food,
2. charming surroundings,
3. warm hospitality,
4. excellent hosts, and/or
5. fun/stimulating company

Sympathy Letters:

a. Refer to the loss or tragedy directly but sensitively. In the first sentence mention the loss and your personal reaction. Unlike other business letters, this letter may start with “I” since you are expressing personal feelings.

b. For deaths, praise the deceased. Describe positive personal characteristics (Howard was a forceful but caring leader.) Specific information on how much the person will be missed will bring real comfort to loved ones. The reaction by loved ones is often, "Gosh, I didn't realize how much the company liked dad."

c. Offer assistance. Suggest your availability, especially if you can do something specific.

d. End on a reassuring, positive note. Perhaps refer to the strength the reader finds in friends, family, colleagues or religion.
Recognition Letters:

a. **Write promptly.** Don’t procrastinate in recognizing accomplishments and significant events in the lives of friends, customers, and fellow workers.

b. **Personalize the message.** Include specific details, anecdotes, and meaningful tidbits that show your thoughtfulness and feelings.

**Sources:** adapted from Bovee and Thill, *Business Communication Today*; M.E. Guffey, *Essentials of Business Communication*, Kitty Locker, *Business and Administrative Communication*