

PRIMER: HOW TO USE ASK SENTENCES



LETTER ASK SENTENCES

A letter must ask for a gift. The ask sentence may include a suggested amount, as shown in one of the following examples, or it may leave that suggestion to the reply card. You can mention on-line giving in the letter or leave that to the reply card, since a large majority of donors continue to give by check, and we don't want to clutter up the ask.

- **PROSPECTS:** Will you please make a donation today of \$100 by returning your check with the enclosed reply card, or by giving on-line at xyz/donate.org?
- **LYBUNTS (Last-Year-But-Not-This) and Current Year Donors/Second Gift:** Will you please continue your support by returning your check with the enclosed reply card?
- **SYBUNTS (Some-Year-But-Not-This):** Thank you so much for your support. Will you please renew your support today by returning your check with the enclosed reply card?

RESPONSE CARD ASK SENTENCES & ASK STRINGS

An affirmation strengthens the decision to give. When possible use identity words like 'invest' or 'join' and one or two words that recap the case for giving.

Prospects — various approaches are shown:

Yes, Peter, I want to support the Monadnock Community Hospital Annual Fund!

Enclosed is my gift of: \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$_____

Yes, Peter, I want to invest in Bennington!

Enclosed is my gift of: \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$_____

Yes, Pam, I want to join others in fighting for human rights!

Enclosed is my gift of: \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$_____

Yes, I want to join Rutland's life-saving team!

Enclosed is my gift of: \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$_____



Previous Donors — one of the previous affirmations can be used, or you can use the word *renew*, as in the following example:

Yes, Ann, I want to renew my support!

Enclosed is my gift of: \$1,000 \$750 \$500 Other \$ _____

SEGMENT USING PAST GIVING HISTORY

Past giving history may be used to further segment the previous donor ask sentences and ask strings on the response card.

LYBUNTS and SYBUNTS:

- *Reminding donors of their last gift amount and date improves response rate and sustains donation level.*
- *Using an ask string encourages an increase in the amount of the gift.*

Yes, Donna, I want to continue my support!

My previous support was \$25 in April of 2020.

Enclosed is my gift of: \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$ _____

Yes, Donna, I want to continue my support!

Thank you for your gift of \$25 in April of 2020.

Enclosed is my gift of: \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$ _____

Multi-year givers — may be reminded of their loyalty.

Thank you for your steadfast support and especially for your last gift of \$100 in April of 2020.

Enclosed is my gift of: \$150 \$125 \$100 Other \$ _____

Lapsed donors — if a donor has not given in the last 5 years, the previous gift amount becomes less relevant, and you can revert to the prospect ask string and ask sentence.

Yes, Gary, I want to renew my support!

Enclosed is my gift of: \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$ _____

MORE ASK SENTENCE SCENARIOS

Giving Society Renewal:

Thank you for your last gift of \$1,000, made on April, 9, 2022. Will you please renew your membership in the Associates Giving Society today by making a gift of \$1,500?

Enclosed is my gift of: \$2,000 \$1,500 \$1,000 Other \$ _____

Upgrade to Giving Society:

Thank you for your last gift of \$750, made on 6/1/22. Will you join me in the Chairman's Round Table by making a gift of \$1,000 or more this year?

Enclosed is my gift of: \$1,250 \$1,000 \$750 Other \$ _____

Second gift this year:

Thank you so much for your gift of \$50, made on 3/1/22. Will you continue your support with another gift of: \$150 \$100 \$50 Other \$ _____

Major Donor — ask strings should be customized based on your knowledge of the donor. Or, you may consider not including an ask string. Instead, you'll send the letter and response card with a personal note asking for a specific amount. Or you will call in advance, or right after mailing to discuss the gift. Or you may hand deliver the letter and response card, and discuss the gift amount while visiting with the donor. This simple approach works for all these scenarios:

Thank you so much for your gift of \$7,500, made on 12/26/2022.

Enclosed is my gift of: \$ _____



Thank you so much for your gift of \$1,000, made on 12/26/2022.

John, will you consider increasing your support this year to \$1,500?

Enclosed is my gift of: \$ _____

Finally, here is an example of a response form that appeals visually to donor loyalty. It is very donor-centric. Examine it closely because this response form improves annual fund direct mail results. Naturally, Five Maples can help you implement your own version!

Yes, Michael! I want to help combat homelessness in the Upper Valley!

 **Thank you for your generous support for two years!** 

My previous gift was \$150 in March of 2022.

Enclosed is my gift of: \$250 \$200 \$150 Other \$ _____

Gift Method

Check for Upper Valley Haven enclosed
or give online at uppervalleyhaven.org/donate

Credit card: AmEx Discover MC Visa

_____/_____
CARD NUMBER EXP DATE

NAME ON CARD

SIGNATURE

Jane Q. Donor
78 River Road S
Putney, VT 05346

Email: _____

Phone: _____





MY RECENT GIFTS

<input type="checkbox"/> 2023	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2022	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2021
<input type="checkbox"/> 2020	<input type="checkbox"/> 2019	<input type="checkbox"/> 2018

My total giving in 2022 was \$150.
This data was compiled on 4/22/23

To provide dependable monthly support for Upper Valley Haven, I'd like to become a **Sustaining Donor**. Please charge my credit card the following amount every month:

\$25 \$20 \$15 Other \$ _____

Upper Valley Haven
FOOD | SHELTER | EDUCATION | PROBLEM SOLVING

713 Hartford Ave
White River Junction
VT 05001

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Download our guide “How to Use Ask Strings” which includes our Recommended Ask String table.



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