

The Etiquette of Tipping

The intent of tipping is universal—to ensure prompt service or to offer thanks for the delivery of prompt service.

What the tip means

There are two kinds of tipping: the *influential* tip and the *thank-you* tip.

The influential tip is what you might give to a maitre d' who has reserved your favorite table for you. This kind of tip is generally given to a person to show your appreciation for a service that's been done for you.

The thank-you tip is a form of acknowledgement that you give a person who has performed a service for you (served you, met your requests, etc.). This kind of tip should be given after the service has been rendered.

When? Where? How much?

Following are some guidelines to help you determine just how thankful you should be in various situations. Let's begin with restaurant personnel.

- **Maitre d'.** If you're a regular patron of a restaurant, consider giving \$10 or \$20 to the maitre d' after every few visits.
- **Captain.** This person should receive 25 percent of the tip you are leaving. For example, if you leave a 20-percent tip on a check totaling \$100, \$5 of the \$20 tip should be given to the captain. You may deliver the tip to this person by specifying his portion of the gratuity on the bill. Or you may hand it to him when you leave.
- **Server.** The tip for this person should be 15- to 20-percent of the total check. (Be sure to base your tip on the pretax amount.) If you have received outstanding service, 20 percent should be rendered.
 - Note: A tip of 15-percent of the pretax bill should also be left for servers at a buffet.
- **Busboy.** The restaurant manager should deliver a portion of the 15- to 20-percent tip left for a server to this person.
- **Bartender.** Fifteen percent of your tab total (and no less than \$0.50) should be left for the bartender.
- **Sommelier.** Leave a \$3 to \$5 tip to your wine steward for opening the bottle at your table and also for replenishing your glasses. You may give the tip directly to him or her, leave it with the maitre d', or specify the amount you are leaving for this person on your bill.
- **Coat-room attendant.** A good rule of thumb is to leave \$0.50 per coat or item.
- **Parking valet.** One or two dollars should be given when your car is parked for you and returned to you.
- **Washing attendant.** If you have accepted a towel or related service from this person, \$0.50 to \$1 is in order.

Tippling is also in order for many hotels employees. Here's a guideline.

- **Shuttle driver.** When taking a courtesy shuttle from the airport to your hotel, it is definitely in order to tip the driver 15 percent of what it would have cost if you were driven by taxi.
- **Bellman.** This person should receive \$0.50 to \$1 per bag, both when you are shown to your room and upon departure.
- **Chambermaid.** If you are hotel guest for three to five days, it is appropriate to leave a tip (\$5, for example) for your room maid. Leave it on the dresser in an envelope marked, "Chambermaid," or leave the marked envelope with the desk clerk as you are checking out.
- **Room service.** It's most appropriate to add 15 percent to the check. Sometimes the gratuity is already added in—so be sure to read what you're signing.
- **Doorman.** When a taxi is hailed for you, the doorman should receive \$1. Some doormen also expect to receive a tip even if a taxi is already available and they merely open and close door for you. In such cases you'll have to just use your best judgment.
- **Housekeeping.** The delivery person who brings you a hair dryer or iron and ironing board should receive at least \$1.
- **Concierge.** When a special service has been performed (such as procuring difficult-to-obtain theater tickets or airline reservations) a \$5-to-\$10 tip should be given upon completion of the service requested or prior to checking out.
- **Taxi driver.** It's customary to tip 15 percent of the fare.

Typical tipping blunders

With those guides in place, remember to steer clear of the common tipping blunders by adopting the following half-percents.

- Be prepared for tipping. Never wangle out of leaving a tip by making excuses that you have only large bills with you.
- Plan ahead. Have your tip money available in hand or in pocket to avoid fumbling around for it.
- Leave a bill, rather than a pile of loose change, as a tip.
- When the position warrants it, always tip the person who has served you—even it's likely you'll never encounter him or her again.
- Be discreet about tallying the amount of your tip. Never, for instance, use a calculator at the table for this purpose.
- Leave a small tip, even if the service was poor. If you were not pleased with the service, simply don't return.