

PROBLEM SOLVED

The Definitive Tipping Guide (an excerpt from Real Simple Magazine)

Tippers and tippees across the country put in their two cents (or two dollars) for this guide to tipping everyone from parking valets to party clowns (but not waiters and bartenders -- that you already knew).

Hairstylist/Colorist

Average tip: 15 percent of total cost (post-tax).

Exceptional circumstances: If a stylist conquers a last-minute hair crisis or fits you in on a busy Saturday, tip \$3 to \$5 more.

Things to consider: In major metropolitan areas, it is customary to tip salon owners who cut your hair, too.

Salon Assistant

Average tip: \$2 to \$5 for each person.

Exceptional circumstances: If she gives you a nice scalp or neck massage, tip \$1 to \$2 more.

Things to consider: Hand your tip directly to the person who did the shampoo or blow-dry, rather than leaving it with the cashier.

Car-Wash Attendant

Average tip: \$2 per car for a standard wash.

Exceptional circumstances: Tip \$3 to \$5 for an SUV or another large vehicle. Tip 15 percent for a detailing.

Things to consider: Many car washes pool employee tips. If you want to reward an individual, tip him personally.

Valet-Parking or Garage Attendant

Average tip: Onetime parking, \$2 to \$5.

Exceptional circumstances: If you pay for monthly parking, tip only at the holidays -- \$25 and up, given to the garage manager.

Things to consider: For valet parking, tip the guy who brings you your car, not the one who takes it away.

A Helpful Nurse

Average tip: Usually not permitted.

Exceptional circumstances: Small tokens of appreciation, such as candy and flowers, are acceptable. Thank-you notes are also appreciated.

Things to consider: Since nurses work in teams, direct your gift to the "floor" of the hospital rather than to individuals.

Dog Groomer

Average tip: \$5 to \$15.

Exceptional circumstances: For a dog that's large, shaggy, or snappy, tip on the high end. Add a few

dollars more for free extra services.

Things to consider: In Los Angeles and New York City, dogs often get more pampering, and groomers may get tips of \$50 and up.

Clothing Salesperson

Average tip: None.

Exceptional circumstances: If a salesperson went all out to find the perfect outfit for your sister's wedding, send a thank-you note or a small gift.

Things to consider: Cash tips or costly gifts are discouraged or prohibited in many large chain stores.

Barista (Starbucks)

Average tip: Spare change.

Exceptional circumstances: If your regular server places your order the second you walk in, saving you wait time, tip \$1.

Things to consider: If you use a prepaid card, tip a few dollars at the time of your purchase, rather than on a per-drink basis.

Cashier for Takeout Food

Average tip: Up to 10 percent.

Exceptional circumstances: For an extra-large or rush order, or if the cashier helps you to your car, tip 10 percent or more.

Things to consider: If you're a regular customer, tip the cashier well to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of your orders.

Furniture Delivery

Average tip: \$5 to \$10 per person.

Exceptional circumstances: If the deliverymen help you try out furniture in several locations or do assembling, tip an extra \$5 to \$10.

Things to consider: Extreme weather, like a heat wave, is also grounds for a bigger tip (and a cold pitcher of lemonade or iced tea).

Food Delivery

Average tip: 10 to 15 percent.

Exceptional circumstances: If the driver makes an exception to go beyond the normal delivery zone, tip him a couple of dollars extra.

Things to consider: If the restaurant already includes a delivery fee, do not feel obliged to tip more.

Grocery Delivery

Average tip: Not necessary; there is usually a delivery fee.

Exceptional circumstances: If you're in an out-of-the-way location, tip the driver \$2 to \$5 for going the extra distance.

Things to consider: While some stores officially discourage tipping, the drivers aren't likely to refuse your cash

Person Who Carries Groceries to Your Car

Average tip: None.

Exceptional circumstances: While tips aren't expected, if someone has been particularly patient or helpful, offer a couple of dollars.

Things to consider: The nationwide consensus is that bringing groceries to a customer's car is part of the service you're paying for.

Person Who Carries a Big-Box Item to Your Car

Average tip: None.

Exceptional circumstances: Stores like Best Buy and Home Depot prohibit employees from accepting tips -- plasma TVs are no exception.

Things to consider: Remember that employees who accept tips in violation of company policy may be disciplined.

UPS/FEDEX

Average tip: None.

Exceptional circumstances: If the driver moves a big, bulky order into your living room, you may want to tip him a few dollars.

Things to consider: If you get frequent deliveries from the same driver, tip at the holidays.

SkyCap

Average tip: \$1 to \$2 a bag.

Exceptional circumstances: If he tapes up an overstuffed suitcase or skips over other customers to get you to the gate on time, tip \$5 to \$20.

Things to consider: At some airports and airlines, skycaps can make seat requests. If yours gets you the exit row, tip \$5 to \$10.

Hotel Maid Service

Average tip: \$2 to \$5 per night.

Exceptional circumstances: If you're into rock star-style hotel-room trashing, then tip like a rock star.

Things to consider: Maids often rotate, so tip daily. Leave the tip in an envelope addressed to "Housekeeping," not as loose cash.

Swimming-Pool Attendant

Average tip: For a towel, nothing.

Exceptional circumstances: If the attendant drags over extra lounge chairs, lends you sunscreen, or finds you a newspaper, tip \$2 to \$5.

Things to consider: If you want an attendant to remember to reserve your favorite chairs, tip \$2 per chair on the first day.

House-Painter

Average tip: Not required.

Exceptional circumstances: If you're especially pleased with the job, tip each painter \$10 to \$20.

Things to consider: Painters appreciate it when clients provide food and drink for the crew.

Building Super or Handyman

Average tip: None for a one-time service.

Exceptional circumstances: If he helps with things outside the job description -- networking computers, for example -- tip accordingly.

Things to consider: At holiday time, show your appreciation for a super super with a \$25 to \$100 tip or a gift of equal value.

Self-Employed Contractor

Average tip: Not required.

Exceptional circumstances: If a contractor clearly worked more hours than he billed, thank him with tickets to a game or a concert.

Things to consider: Tips aren't standard, but lunch or a bottomless cup of coffee is always appreciated.

Kids' Party Performer

Average tip: 15 to 20 percent of the performer's fee.

Exceptional circumstances: If the performer fulfills lots of special requests or deals well with a rowdy crowd, tip \$20 to \$50 extra.

Things to consider: The more generous the performer is with his time, the more generous you should be with your tip.

Officiant at a Wedding or Other Special Occasion

Average tip: Donation to the house of worship.

Exceptional circumstances: Send a note and a small gift to an officiant who helped solve problems or made an event memorable.

Things to consider: Your relationship with the officiant and the scale of the event. Ask if your congregation has donation guidelines.

Bartender at an Open-Bar Event

Average tip: If you're a guest, no tip.

Exceptional circumstances: If you're spending lots of time at the bar or ordering labor-intensive cocktails, tip at \$1 a drink.

Things to consider: The person throwing the event is responsible for tipping (15 to 20 percent, by the way); you aren't.

Cable Installer

Average tip: Usually not permitted.

Exceptional circumstances: If she spends a half hour in the crawlspace under your house on a hot day, get her a cold drink.

Things to consider: An installer who suggests a tip in exchange for "free" extra channels is probably violating company rules.

Movers

Average tip: \$20 to \$50 per mover.

Exceptional circumstances: If the movers had a piano or several flights of stairs to deal with, tip each person an additional \$5 to \$10.

Things to consider: For a big move, 10 to 15 percent of the total cost to the team leader to divide among the crew.

Real Estate Agent/Broker

Average tip: None.

Exceptional circumstances: If your agent or broker showed you 60 places or made numerous offers on your behalf, give a noncash gift.

Things to consider: It's customary for a real estate agent to give you a gift after the sale is made.