



## Primer: How to Use Ask Sentences

**The most basic segmentation is between Prospects and Previous Donors.**

### Letter ask sentences.

Generally, the letter asks for a gift without specifying the particulars.

**Prospects:** Will you please make a donation today by returning your check with the enclosed reply card?

**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 and ask strings.

The response card usually has an affirmation and asks for a specific amount in the form of an ask string.

**Prospects.** Various approaches are shown.

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

Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$100  \$50  \$25  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Yes, I want to invest in Bennington!**

Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$100  \$50  \$25  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

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

Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$100  \$50  \$25  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Yes, Tom, I want to join Rutland's Life Saving Team!**

Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$100  \$50  \$25  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

### Previous Donors

One of the above affirmations can be used, or you can use the word renew, as in the following:

**Yes, Ann, I want to renew my support!**

Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$1,000  \$750  \$500  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

**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 2012.  
Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$100  \$50  \$25  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

OR

**Thank you for your gift of \$25 in April of 2012.**

Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$100  \$50  \$25  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

Multi-year givers may be reminded of their loyalty:

**Thank you for your steadfast support each year and especially for your last gift of \$25, made on 12/15/12.**

Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$100  \$50  \$25  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

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 contribution of:

\$100  \$50  \$25  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

## Giving Society Renewal

Thank you for your last gift of \$1,000, made on 4/9/2012. Will you please renew your membership in the Associates Giving Society today by making a gift of \$1,150?

\$1,500  \$1,250  \$1,000  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

## Upgrade to Giving Society

Thank you for your last gift of \$750, made on 6/1/2012. Will you join me in the Chairman's Round Table by making a gift of \$1,000 or more this year?

\$1,500  \$1,250  \$1,000  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

## Second gift this year.

Thank you so much for your gift of \$50, made on 3/1/2013. Will you continue your support with another gift of:

\$100  \$75  \$50  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Major Donor.** 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 12/26/2012.

Enclosed is my contribution:

\$\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you so much for your gift of \$1,000, made on 12/26/2012.

John, will you consider increasing your support this year to \$1,250?

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, Ann, I would like to make a gift of gratitude to support the best care possible at Anna Jaques Hospital.**

**Enclosed is my pledge for:**

\$300  \$250  \$150  Other:\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please update your contact information:**

Ms. Jane Q. Donor  
78 River Road South  
Putney, VT 05436  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Greatest Need  Breast Care Center  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment Options**

Check made payable to AJH Community Health Foundation is enclosed

Charge my credit card:

Visa  Master Card  AMEX  Discover

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_  
CCV# \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name as it appears on card

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Or, you may give on-line at [www.ajh.org/giving](http://www.ajh.org/giving)

*Thank you!*

**RECENT GIFTS TO ANNA JAUQUES:**

<input type="checkbox"/> FY2013	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FY2012
<input type="checkbox"/> FY2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FY2010
<input type="checkbox"/> FY2009	<input type="checkbox"/> Your Hospital: <i>The Campaign for Anna Jaques</i>

Date of last gift: 4/18/2012  
Total giving FY2012: \$150.00

Anna Jaques fiscal year is Oct 1<sup>st</sup>-Sept 30<sup>th</sup>  
The data above was compiled on Nov 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
[www.ajh.org/giving](http://www.ajh.org/giving)

To leave a gift in your will, simply share this sentence with your attorney or financial planner:

"I bequeath \$ \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_% of my estate to Anna Jaques Community Health Foundation, 25 Highland Ave., Newburyport, MA 01950."

I have included Anna Jaques Community Health Foundation in my will.

**ANNA JAUQUES COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION**  
25 Highland Avenue, Newburyport, MA 01950  
[www.ajh.org](http://www.ajh.org) • 978-463-1176

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**For more information:**

Download the report Recommended Ask String Instructions and Table from our Web site: <https://fivemaples.com/services/copywriting-editing-design/response-card-design-gallery/> and read our series of teaching posts on our web site about the why and how of ask strings, starting with this one: <https://fivemaples.com/blog/why-anchoring-improves-your-average-donation/>

- Do this in succession for each of the ranges in the Recommended Ask String Table.
- It is quicker to sort the Ask3 column from lowest to highest and begin adding the amounts in Ask1 and Ask2. But, when sorting, you have to be very careful that every column is sorting at the same time. Otherwise your data could become misaligned. It takes longer but it's safer to use Filter.
- If a previous donor has not given to the annual fund for five years, use the prospect ask string.
- The figures in the ask strings should be without decimals, e.g., \$25, \$100, \$1,000.

Last Annual Fund Gift Amount	Ask1	Ask2	Ask3
\$5.00	\$50	\$35	\$5
\$4.00	\$50	\$35	\$5
\$5.00	\$50	\$35	\$5
\$11.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$5.00	\$50	\$35	\$5
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$5.00	\$50	\$35	\$5
\$10.00	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$5.00	\$50	\$35	\$5
\$9.99	\$50	\$35	\$10
\$5.00	\$50	\$35	\$5

Table: 7: After pasting in Ask1 and Ask2 amounts for Ask3 range \$1-\$10