

The New York Times

December 19, 2020
ASK REAL ESTATE

Is It Tacky to Give Holiday Tips Digitally?

And now that we have Venmo, PayPal and other money-transfer services, are cash tips a thing of the past?



By Ronda Kaysen

Q: I have a long list of holiday tips to give out this year: to my doorman, handyman, super, nanny, housekeeper and others. Normally, I give cash and a greeting card, but would it be OK to tip with Venmo or another digital platform instead this year? It feels awkward handing out cards when we're supposed to be socially distancing, but sending a gift over Venmo feels tacky and impersonal. How do I handle it tastefully?

A: There is no shame in tipping digitally. Your recipients would likely appreciate the contactless option in a year when we're all trying our best to keep a distance.

AKAM, which manages residential properties in New York, has been encouraging residents to tip digitally, when they inquire about it. "People are very happily accepting gifts on Venmo," said Vishal Kaura, the senior director of premier hospitality training and development at AKAM. The method is more popular in newer buildings in neighborhoods like Williamsburg and TriBeCa, where residents tend to skew younger.

Will this become the new normal? Mr. Kaura suspects that once the pandemic ends, many people will return to cash tips, but not everyone. "Gen Z loves to do everything digitally," he said. "Moving forward, the younger generations may end up doing it digitally."

Those little cash envelopes may become a thing of the past.

A version of this article appears in print on Dec. 20, 2020, Section RE, Page 2 of the New York edition with the headline: Gifts in the Digital Age.

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