

**Pay it forward** is an expression for describing the beneficiary of a good deed repaying it to others instead of to the original benefactor.

Pay it forward was used as a key plot element in the denouement of a New Comedy play by Menander, *Dyskolos* (a title which can be translated as "The Grouch"). *Dyskolos* was a prizewinning play in ancient Athens in 317 BC; however, the text of the play was lost and it was only recovered and republished in 1957.

The concept was rediscovered and described by Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to Benjamin Webb dated April 25, 1784:

"I do not pretend to give such a deed; I only lend it to you. When you [...] meet with another honest Man in similar Distress, you must pay me by lending this Sum to him; enjoining him to discharge the Debt by a like operation, when he shall be able, and shall meet with another opportunity. I hope it may thus go thro' many hands, before it meets with a Knave that will stop its Progress. This is a trick of mine for doing a deal of good with a little money."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his 1841 essay *Compensation*,<sup>[3]</sup> wrote: "In the order of nature we cannot render benefits to those from whom we receive them, or only seldom. But the benefit we receive must be rendered again, line for line, deed for deed, cent for cent, to somebody."

In 1916, Lily Hardy Hammond wrote, "You don't pay love back; you pay it forward."

An anonymous spokesman for Alcoholics Anonymous said in the *Christian Science Monitor* in 1944, "You can't pay anyone back for what has happened to you, so you try to find someone you can pay forward."

The term "pay it forward" was popularized by Robert A. Heinlein in his book *Between Planets*, published in 1951:

The banker reached into the folds of his gown, pulled out a single credit note. "But eat first—a full belly steadies the judgment. Do me the honor of accepting this as our welcome to the newcomer."

His pride said no; his stomach said YES! Don took it and said, "Uh, thanks! That's awfully kind of you. I'll pay it back, first chance."

"Instead, pay it forward to some other brother who needs it."

Heinlein was a mentor to Ray Bradbury, giving him help and quite possibly passing on the concept, made famous by the publication of a letter from him to Heinlein thanking him. In Bradbury's novel *Dandelion Wine*, published in 1957, when the main character Douglas Spaulding is reflecting on his life being saved by Mr. Jonas, the Junkman:

How do I thank Mr. Jonas, he wondered, for what he's done? How do I thank him, how pay him back? No way, no way at all. You just can't pay. What then? What? Pass it on somehow, he thought, pass it on to someone else. Keep the chain moving. Look around, find someone, and pass it on. That was the only way....

Karma Kitchen, where patrons' meals have already been paid for by previous customers, and customers are then encouraged to contribute toward future patrons' meals.

Pay it forward and start an enormous ripple effect of kindness acts around the world.

The Golden Rule is not synonymous with "paying it forward"; it is more expansive. "Paying it forward" is predicated upon you already having received of a good turn; it is reactive. The Golden Rule ('All things that you \*want\* men to do to you, you also must do to them') is proactive; it requires you to practice (Note: practice -- "All things" -- not random acts) the kindness you would wish to receive. "Be the good you want to see," is basically a reiteration. ("Paying it forward" instead suggests, "Be the good you see.")