

Make a Family Gratitude Jar

The power of gratitude is endless! Research shows that practicing gratitude can strengthen relationships, improve physical and emotional well-being, deepen empathy skills, and improve self-esteem. With such wide-spread benefits, how can we create our own gratitude practice at home with children? First, define gratitude to your children. Then, have them fill out notecards with examples of what they are thankful for. This daily activity is ideal for preschool through second grade learners and is something your whole family will enjoy!



What You Need:

- [The Thankful Book by Todd Parr](#) or similar book about gratitude
- Empty container (e.g., a recycled glass jar or small box)
- Markers or crayons
- Notecards
- Decorating supplies such as: glue, glitter glue, stickers, paint

What You Do:

1. Begin with a discussion about gratitude. For younger kids, a great way to start is by reading aloud a picture book such as [The Thankful Book by Todd Parr](#). As you read, pause to ask your child open-ended questions such as, “What do you see on this page? Why do you think they are grateful for _____?”
2. Define gratitude for your child as, “Gratitude is a feeling of thankfulness and appreciation.” Share something that you are thankful for, then ask, “What is one thing you are thankful for?”
3. Explain that today you are going to work together to make a Gratitude Jar, a place where you will write down things you are thankful for every day.
4. Show your child the materials and model different ways they might decorate their jar such as painting, adding stickers, using glitter glue, etc.
5. Provide time for your child to use the materials to decorate the jar, giving assistance as needed.
6. Choose a consistent time each day to sit down as a family and each identify one thing to be grateful for each day. It can be helpful to use a sentence frame such as “I am thankful for _____ today.”
7. Create a non-judgmental space as you share. Whatever you think of goes. This might mean your child is thankful for chocolate chip cookies one day, and that’s okay! The act of identifying things you are grateful for will provide a nurturing space for your whole family to identify both big and small things.
8. Use a notecard to write down what you are thankful for. For younger children, have them dictate to you while you write it down, and encourage them to draw a picture. For beginning writers, create a sentence starter that says, “I am thankful for _____.” Then, have them fill in the blank.
9. Read through the slips in your gratitude jar when the jar is full or when you need a pick-me-up. This is a great way to help your child remember all of the positive things in their life.

Once the gratitude jar becomes a part of your day-to-day routine, think about how you might extend the experience. Perhaps you ask your child to think about a particular person or part of the natural world that they are grateful for. Encourage the whole family to get creative in ways to share their gratitude with others—can you make thank you cards for friends, family members, or teachers? Perhaps you decide to volunteer at a local animal shelter or food bank. However you choose to share—gratitude will grow and grow!

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