

# Gratitude BY THE NUMBERS

AN AGE-BY-AGE GUIDE TO CULTIVATING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE



THE LEADER IN ONLINE TRAINING FOR PARENTS OF TODDLERS TO TEENS



## AGES 2-5

**Put it on display.** Create visual reminders that hang on the refrigerator, car window or bathroom mirror to express thanks to others.

**Make it secret.** Create a “secret signal” to help your young kids remember to say thanks. Keep it on the down-low to avoid the awkward, “What do you say?” moments, and help empower your kids to remember on their own someday.

**Remember the giver.** As kids enjoy new presents, talk about the people who gave them those gifts.

**De-emphasize the presents.** When planning celebrations, keep the focus on family and friends attending and the experience as a whole (including decorations, special songs, games, traditions and foods).

**Create a thank-you.** When your young kids receive gifts, they should be expected to create and send a thank-you picture or short note within one day (or at the rate of one or two thank-you's per day).

**Be polite to Mr. Bear.** Role-play using good manners and saying “thank you” using stuffed animals and action figures.

**Pick your top 3.** At dinner or bedtime, take turns sharing the three best things about your day.

**Commit it to memory.** Find and memorize thank-you prayers, songs or poems.

**Make a different kind of gift list.** Write down the things (preferably handmade) your preschoolers would like to give friends and family as holiday gifts.

## AGES 6-10

**Be a good neighbor.** Make treats to deliver to your neighbors any time of year.

**Pass it on.** Encourage your kids to sort through toys, books and clothes and choose a few to pass along to someone in need (or a younger sibling). Consider making this a twice-yearly tradition, just before a birthday or other gift-giving holiday.

**Pitch in.** Set up “family contributions” (chores) to be done on a daily and weekly basis. When kids contribute to the household responsibilities, they learn how much work is involved to run a home. This in turn makes them more grateful for all that Mom and Dad do for them.

**Handwritten thank-you's.** One sentence per grade is a good rule of thumb, and be sure to send them out promptly.

**Make a gratitude jar.** Fill it with short handwritten notes of gratitude (“I’m thankful we won the big game!” or, “I’m grateful Grandma came to visit.”). Pick a special time to pull out notes at random and read them aloud.

**Say thank-you with cookies.** Prepare and deliver a homemade “thank you” to your local fire or police department, or your pediatrician’s or dentist’s office. Make it stick. Leave sticky notes for each family member to thank them for something you appreciate.

**Celebrate your year.** Every birthday, make a list of things you are grateful for that year. A 5-year-old can think of five things, while a 10-year-old can manage at least ten.



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## AGES 11-13

**Aid a neighbor in need.** Prepare a meal for a neighbor to help out while they face a life challenge, or simply to show kindness.

**Leave the change.** Next time you buy from a vending machine, leave the change for someone else.

**Work for free.** Babysit or do yard work for a neighbor who needs a hand, at no charge.

**Write about it.** Start a gratitude journal, and keep track of the things, big and small, you are thankful for.

**Think behind the scenes.** Thank the school janitor personally (or the mail carrier, or sanitation workers). Let them know a specific thing you appreciate, keeping in mind that they rarely get the thanks they deserve.

**Keep a running list.** On a whiteboard, list the top 10 things you're thankful for (or fewer for younger kids). Modify it as often as you'd like.

**Get it on video.** Make a thank-you video for someone who gave you a gift or showed you a kindness. Saying thank you is always important, but it's okay to think beyond the note.

**Make a plan.** Research a service project, and make a plan to execute it. Invite others to join in.

**Create a gratitude photo book.** Using a smart phones (or a plain old camera, or magazines), gather photos of the things you're thankful for.

**Help out without being asked.** Make it a goal to do so once a day—and for any member of the family.

**Give a gift card.** Save up money to purchase a gift card (grocery store, gas card, etc.) for a person in need.



## AGES 14-18

**Take a Gratitude Walk.** During a 10-minute daily stroll, take time to think about all the things you are grateful for, as recommended by author Jon Gordon.

**Go online.** Find an online cause to donate to, such as a person you may know raising money through Go Fund Me.

**Text your thanks.** Make a ritual of sending one daily "thank-you text" to a family member, or simply tell them you're thinking of them.

**Be generous.** Leave a big tip for a particularly good server, and discuss as a family why they deserved it. Write them a thank you note on the bill (link to recent TODAY Show article).

**Offer a free lunch.** Gift a meal to a homeless person. Smile and make eye contact while delivering it.

**Thank a teacher or coach.** Send a handwritten note to let him know how much his efforts make a difference.

**Volunteer a Saturday.** Think food pantry or animal shelter, and try to make it a regular commitment.

**Go back to school.** Donate your time to your old elementary or middle school and let your former teachers and coaches know how much they helped you.

**Create a new family gratitude ritual.** Make it something you can continue when you're on your own.

**Pay it forward in the drive thru lane.** Use your own money to pay for someone else's meal.



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