

Keeping a Gratitude Journal

November is alive with the spirit of Thanksgiving. Around the U.S., moms are planning menus, ordering turkeys, freezing pies, and thinking about how to set a festive holiday table.

Thanksgiving isn't just a one-day holiday where we watch football and eat till we can't move. No, thanksgiving is an **attitude of the heart**, and developing this "attitude of gratitude" takes practice!

You may have noticed that it's way easier to be grouchy and grumbly than it is to be appreciative. That's because it's hard to be thankful when you're always thinking of yourself. And if we're honest, we know this is true of most of us.

This month, I'd like to encourage you and your family to focus on **30 days of gratitude**. To help you do this, we're going to keep a **Gratitude Journal**.



Plan Your Journal

1. Decide where and how to record your thoughts. Each person needs an outlet—and the choices are many! Here are four ideas for keeping a gratitude journal:
 - **Notebook.** Keep a daily journal by writing in something as elegant as a leather diary or as simple as a spiral notebook.
 - **Prayer Journal.** Write each daily note of thanks as a prayer to the Lord.
 - **Blog.** Record your journal online, if you have a blog.
 - **Journal Jar.** Write your thoughts on pieces of paper and store them in a mason jar or small box.

It's very possible that each person in your family will end up journaling their thankful thoughts in different ways—and that's okay! Don't start off on the wrong foot by criticizing your sister's choice or telling your brother that your journal is better than his. Instead, think of ways to offer encouragement.

2. Next, choose a name for your Thanksgiving gratitude project. Here are a few ideas:

- Gratitude Journal
- 30 Days of Gratitude
- Thankful Project
- My Thankful Box (or Jar)
- I Am Thankful

Count Your Blessings



Ponder a bit. What makes you thankful? At first, the obvious will pop into your minds: *food, family, friends, faith*.

Those are great, and we're all thankful for them. But also look for **hidden, unexpected, or less obvious** things too, such as the smell of clean hair, hugs from Nana, a cup of cocoa, a kind deed, or a gold star on your piano piece.

What else can you be thankful for?

- **Creation.** Fresh snow, pink sunsets, autumn colors, grass and flowers, giraffes, snapping turtles.
- **Provision.** My house, food, clothing, toys, books, pets, family and friends; for Daddy's job; that Mom can stay home and teach us; for hot water, warm blankets, and comfortable beds.
- **Gifts and talents.** Are you musical, athletic, or smart? Be thankful! Are you a talented photographer? Are you good at building Legos, mowing the grass, or baking? Be thankful! Do you know how to raise goats or plant a garden? Are you kind, loyal, or faithful? Be thankful! Are you a hard worker? Can you dance? Do you excel at computers, math, or science? Do you love reading, writing, drawing, or building with your hands? Give thanks!

Every day, look for ways to be thankful for big and little things.

Write Them Down

Younger children can write one thing every day.

Older children (and parents) can write 3-5 things you're grateful for. Whether each note is brief or lengthy, it should be personally meaningful.

Write Correctly

This is a journal, but it's also a writing assignment. Therefore, make sure to use **complete sentences, punctuate properly, and choose strong, interesting words.**

Make it Personal

If you wish, you can make your notebook or journal box even more personal by including quotations, Bible verses, or photographs. If you do, make sure you include personal writing, too.

- [Quotations about gratitude](#)
- [Bible verses about gratitude](#)

Journal Faithfully

Keep your gratitude journal for the **entire month of November**—or at least through Thanksgiving. As a special Thanksgiving Day activity, each family member can share one or two excerpts from their journals.

Gratitude is an amazing thing.

- It's **good for our health** and well-being.
- It helps us **choose contentment** over want, self-centeredness, and entitlement.
- It makes us easier to please.

Being thankful helps us put aside our “me” mentality and become more focused on others. With everyone's hearts and minds turned toward giving thanks and recording blessings, I know that **your home will be refreshed** with better attitudes and kinder thoughts and deeds.

Wishing you happy (and thankful) writing,

Kim



Other Activities That Encourage Gratitude

You can express thanks and appreciation in many ways. Journaling is just one idea! Try some of these suggestions this month—and throughout the year—to help you remember to be thankful.

Do Unto Others

Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.

~William Arthur Ward



Make a list of things you can do to express gratitude to someone who has been kind to you or to show kindness to someone who needs it. Once the list is complete, act on at least one of them. Your list can include things like:

- Bake cookies.
- Make a handmade card.
- Mow the neighbor's lawn.
- Obey the first time Mom or Dad asks me to do something.
- Do a favor without being asked.
- Do one of my brother's chores just because.
- Invite Grandma over and make breakfast for her.
- Write a poem for my auntie because she's so kind to me.
- [Sponsor a child](#) because I'm thankful I have a family.
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, or food bank because I'm thankful I have food and a roof over my head.
- Fill a [Christmas shoebox](#) for a child who doesn't have toys and treats, because I'm blessed to have so much.
- Be kind to someone who doesn't deserve it because God does that for me.

Thank You For...

Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom. ~Marcel Proust

Everyone knows it's important to write a thank-you note when someone gives you a gift, but it doesn't have to stop there. Think of a person who has made an impact on your life. Get out the stationery and writing tools and think of deeper reasons you can express your thanks.

Need some ideas? Start here!

- **Dad.** Thank him for making you feel safe and loved, for working hard for your family, for playing football in the yard, for showing you how to fix a flat on your bike, for teaching you about God, for playing Monopoly with you.
- **Mom.** Thank her for being your teacher, for driving you to all your activities, for cooking tasty meals for your family, for showing you how to bake a chocolate cake, for helping you become kind and compassionate, for setting a good example.
- **Grandparents.** Thank them for things you often take for granted, such as coming to your soccer games or school performances. Thank them for holding a special place in your life and for encouraging, supporting, and loving you.
- **Sunday school teacher.** Thank her for caring about you, for teaching you about Jesus, and even for bringing donuts each week!
- **Soldiers.** Our servicemen and women love to get mail, especially when they are far away from family and friends. If you don't personally know someone who is serving in the military, visit a website such as [Any Soldier.com](http://AnySoldier.com), [A Million Thanks.org](http://AMillionThanks.org), or Letters to Soldiers.org, and send a letter of thanks and appreciation.
- **Newspaper deliverer or postman.** People who provide services don't get thanked very often. Why not thank someone for delivering your mail or paper every day, no matter how hot or cold or rainy or snowy, or for being a dependable worker?
- **Pet.** Yes—you can even write a note to thank your dog or cat for being faithful, friendly, loyal; for being a playmate; or for providing companionship, entertainment, and smiles.



It's Been Said...

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. ~John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Copy favorite quotes about gratitude and thanksgiving and pin them to a wall or bulletin board in your room. For starters, find gratitude quotes [here](#) and [here](#). Then, try one of these ideas:

- Copy each saying using your neatest penmanship.
- Write the quote on fancy paper using calligraphy or italic handwriting.
- Type it on the computer, choose an appropriate font, enlarge the text to fill the page, and print it on pretty paper.

Spreading Blessings

Who does not thank for little will not thank for much. ~Estonian Proverb

All that we behold is full of blessings. ~William Wordsworth

Gratitude doesn't always mean saying "thank you." Simply stepping out of self-centeredness and considering other people's needs and feelings is a form of gratitude, too.

Here's an easy way to make people smile or feel better about themselves: Write inspiring or uplifting thoughts, kind words, and encouraging quotes on a sticky note and place it somewhere random, such as a mirror in a public restroom. I love [Operation Beautiful](#) for this!

Try similar activities at home, too.

- **Thankful Board.** With a parent's help, mount a large sheet of poster board on the wall of your kitchen or family room, and keep a jar of colored markers nearby. Encourage your family to write things you're thankful for, no matter how small. Young siblings can simply draw pictures on the poster board.
- **Post-It® Blitz.** Ask a parent for a stack of sticky notes on which to write down words of gratitude or appreciation. Talk with your family about making a centralized spot for these thankful thoughts, or simply pepper the house with encouraging notes! You'll find yourself thinking better of your family members when you write kind notes to each other instead of teasing, whining, or complaining.

Don't just save gratitude for Thanksgiving. Look for ways throughout the year to express thanks, turning the focus outward. Everyone—especially you!—will be the better for it.

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Are you looking for a writing curriculum that gives your children a wide variety of writing experiences, such as the ones I've been sharing here at SchoolhouseTeachers.com? If so, take a look at [WriteShop](#).

WriteShop Primary – Grades K-3



An introduction to early writing skills, [WriteShop Primary](#) gives young children tools to experience success as they develop the ability to write. Whether you have a more advanced child or one who is just beginning, this program's flexibility lets your young students work at their own level. Gently introduce writing through guided writing practice, favorite picture books, games, and crafty writing projects. Extra challenges appear throughout each lesson to keep the interest of a more advanced child.

"I am amazed at the progress my son made in such a short time. His ability to put his thoughts together in an organized way has improved dramatically." --Bonnie, TX

WriteShop Junior – Grades 3-5



[WriteShop Junior](#) eases your upper-elementary students into writing. Engaging games and activities teach and review important writing and self-editing skills while keeping it fun for everyone. Easy-to-use lesson plans help you lead and guide them through the steps of the writing process. WriteShop Junior exposes children to genre, fiction and nonfiction writing, and journal writing and introduces exciting new brainstorming and editing tools that truly motivate young writers!

"Every time I bring out a writing program, it ends in tears. Thank you for a writing lesson without tears!" --Pam, New Zealand

WriteShop I and II – Middle and High School



The flagship [WriteShop program](#) sets teens on a course for success, guiding them through each step of the writing process. Award-winning WriteShop takes the guesswork out of teaching writing. Assignments give students a chance to practice various kinds of writing, including creative, expository, and narrative. This course also teaches students important techniques of style and self-editing. Lessons focus on clarity, conciseness, colorful vocabulary, and sentence variety, with a strong emphasis placed on the editing process. With each lesson, students learn and practice new skills, apply them to their current writing project, and edit and revise the composition several times.

"I love WriteShop. I used to feel so inadequate teaching writing but now I am confident they are learning all the tools they will need for High School level writing." —Heather, Montana