

Gratitude Tree

Research shows that when we focus on things we're grateful for, we literally rewire our brains to focus on the positive. This gratitude tree activity helps kids experience the joy of gratitude by creating trees with messages of thanks. First, have your children go for a nature walk to find the perfect tree branch that has multiple limbs. Next, make and decorate different color leaves to adorn the branch with messages about thankfulness. Once the leaves are attached, place the branch in a vase or jar. Designed with kindergarten through second grade students in mind, this activity incorporates reading, writing, appreciation, and mindfulness—an important message for kids of all ages!



What You Need:

- Tree branch
- Fall-colored paint (red, orange, yellow)
- A vase or large jar
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- String or yarn
- Hole puncher
- Dark permanent marker
- Pebbles or marbles (optional)

What You Do:

1. Go on a nature hunt to find a special tree branch. You want to make sure that the branch is fairly large and has multiple limbs.
2. Bring the branch inside and set it on your table.
3. Talk with your child about what “gratitude” means. Explain that gratitude has to do with being thankful. Brainstorm some things that you are thankful for in your family (e.g., food, water, shelter, love, family, friends, your dog, etc.).
4. Explain to your family that you are going to make your very own gratitude tree. Assist your kids (level of assistance depends on your child’s needs) in painting the tree branch.
5. As the branch dries, have your child draw leaves on the construction paper. Try to make the leaves fairly big, about two leaves per page. If your child is very young, you can draw the leaves yourself. Cut out the leaves, aiming for about 10 finished leaves.
6. Use the hole puncher to create a hole at the top of each leaf.
7. Have your child write down things they are grateful for on the leaves. Encourage one-word answers like “family,” “love,” or phrases like “friends that like to play basketball.” You can have young kids dictate their responses to you. Kids can also add drawings and decorations to the leaves if desired.
8. When the branch is dry, place it in the vase or jar. You can surround the branch with pebbles or marbles to make it more sturdy.
9. Put string or yarn through the holes of each leaf and tie the leaves to the branch.
10. Refer to your family gratitude tree throughout the season to remind your children the importance of being thankful for what we have! Feel free to keep adding leaves as the season goes on.

