



TAKE-HOME SKILL: GRATITUDE QUESTIONS FOR KIDS

"Noticing. What a gift."

—Byron Katie

OVERVIEW

A list of discussion questions that schools can send home to families to help deepen students' experience of gratitude

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Anytime during the year, but especially when teachers at your child's school are emphasizing gratitude in their classrooms and/or the whole school is cultivating gratitude
- When you notice that your child may benefit from your positive support to pause and recognize something good in their life, whether it's an object or an experience.

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤ 5 minutes

LEVEL

- Pre-K & Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School

MATERIALS

- None

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Become aware of gifts, material or otherwise, that they have been given
- Reflect on why gifts were given to them
- Notice how receiving gifts made them feel
- Consider how they might express their appreciation and/or pay it forward

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision-Making

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

For parents/caregivers: Take a moment to think of something kind that someone else did for you recently. Why do you think they did this? How did it make you feel? How did you show your appreciation? Were you encouraged to do something kind for someone else?

INSTRUCTIONS

- As parents and caregivers, we teach and expect our children to say “thank you” when they receive gifts. (Note: This may apply to only certain cultures.) And while that’s one important part, gratitude also involves other social and emotional skills that need to be broken down and practiced.
- Researchers have identified four parts that make up the gratitude experience:
 - What we NOTICE in our lives for which we can be grateful
 - How we THINK about why we have been given those things
 - How we FEEL about the things we have been given
 - What we DO to express appreciation in turn
- Discussing these parts with your children can teach them about gratitude.
- Here are some examples of NOTICE-THINK-FEEL-DO questions that you can ask your children about their gratitude experiences, whether they are getting an actual present from a relative, receiving kindness from their friends, or eating a tasty meal.

NOTICE:

- What have you been given or what do you already have in your life that you are grateful for?

- Is there a gift behind the gift you are grateful for, like someone thinking or caring about you enough to give you the gift?

THINK:

- Why do you think you received this gift?
- Do you think you owe the giver something in return?
- Do you think you earned the gift because of something you did yourself?
- Do you think the gift was something the giver had to give you?

FEEL:

- Does it make you happy to get this gift?
- What does that feel like inside?
- What about the gift makes you feel happy?

DO:

- Is there a way you want to show how you feel about this gift?
- Does the feeling you have about this gift make you want to share that feeling by giving something to someone else?

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Do you notice if your child is expressing gratitude more often? Are they noticing more when someone does something kind for them? Are they more thoughtful about the gifts they receive?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

A daily diary [study](#) found that the more parents took action to cultivate gratitude in their children on a certain day (such as by talking with their kids about experiences of receiving something from others), the more their kids showed gratitude on that same day—compared to the days when the parents took less action and compared to other kids whose parents took less action.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Children aren't natural-born gratitude experts. Gratitude develops over time, as cognitive abilities mature, and it takes a lot of practice. Parent-child conversations can help by deepening children's understanding of gratitude by breaking it down into parts and raising their awareness of those parts.

Making the effort to [help children cultivate gratitude](#) pays off. Grateful kids and teens tend to be more engaged in their schoolwork and hobbies, get better grades, and be more satisfied with school, family, community, friends, and themselves. They are more likely to have better [social support](#), give more emotional support to others, and

use their strengths to [better their community](#). Overall, they are happier, more optimistic, and more satisfied with their lives.

SOURCE

Hussong, A. M., Langley, H. A., Rothenberg, W. A., Coffman, J. L., Halberstadt, A. G., Costanzo, P. R., & Mokra, I. (2018). Raising grateful children one day at a time. *Applied Developmental Science*, DOI: 10.1080/10888691.2018.1441713.