

How To Teach Your Teenagers About Gratitude With These 5 Hands-on Activities

By [Jen 23 Comments](#)

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Teaching your teenagers to say “thank you” is a start but a true sense of gratitude goes beyond good manners. Sharing easy & fun ways to install a grateful mindset in your kids.

Have you ever watched your teenager receive a gift they don’t like?

Or maybe you’ve been an eyewitness to a scene or two as a child demands a parent buy them something at a store? Rudely tosses aside a compliment? Or bulks at an awesome opportunity created just for them?

I used to be one of “those” people.

You know, “My kids will never....”

Then, I had kids and realized this parenting gig is way harder than it looks.



Why You Need To Keep Teaching Gratitude

As your kids get older and enter the teen years there are a few things you might assume you'll be finished teaching.

For example, hygiene.

I mean, come on! By the time you are 10 years old, you would know that you need to wash your hands and brush your teeth more than once a day, yes?

No. Since [investing in these two books](#) it has been less of a battle but still.

One Word: Deodorant. Am I right?

But teaching gratitude is a bit trickier because a true sense of gratitude goes beyond good manners.

“Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. ” –[Harvard Health Publishing.](#)

We need to find ways to help our teenagers look at things from a different perspective and that is not always easy in a world filled with a “me first” attitude.

By *practicing gratitude* we can help our children overcome this attitude and start appreciating the people, things, and opportunities they have around them.

Think of it this way, how much better do you feel when you work with co-workers who appreciate your time, effort and hard work? When your boss says, “Great job!”? You feel great and it builds your confidence.

That’s because true “[gratitude fosters stronger, more positive and more genuine relationships.](#)”

Helping our children acknowledge and express gratitude for those who make positive aspects of our lives possible **will shift their focus** from what they don’t have. In turn, they will appreciate what they do have and help them foster contentment.

5 Hands-On Activities To Teach Gratitude

Teaching gratitude is not a one and done deal. It takes practice.

And with teenagers, you need to get a little creative!

Here are a few fun and easy ways to get started:

1. Be The Example

That's right, like everything else in life **you must teach yourself first.**

My husband and I make a point of thanking each other for the "for granted" aspects of life, such as making supper, doing housework or even going to work.

Letting each other know we appreciate these seemingly "little" things not only makes us feel happy but sets a great example for our children.

⇒Ask yourself: When is the last time I said thank you to my spouse or child?

Be sure to express how thankful you are that your kids are in your life.

That you love to see them smile, laugh or tell a story. Look for the little things.

Work with your child doing activities such as housework, yard work, or cooking. While doing these hands-on activities, look for moments you can commend, praise, or express gratitude for their actions.

2. Volunteer

Volunteering can be so much fun and open their eyes to the world around them.

Try getting involved with:

- helping someone less fortunate
- reading to animals in a shelter

- rake leaves for an elderly OR busy neighbor (for free!)
- collecting food for the local food bank
- making a meal for someone
- visiting the elderly in nursing homes

3. Encourage Your Children To Express Gratitude

Being thankful is one thing. Saying or showing it can be tough for all of us.

Use these hands-on resources to help your child put into words how they feel.

- [Gratitude Rocks](#)
- Gratitude [Pick Up Sticks](#) ([Learn the rules here](#))
- Create a [Gratitude Tree](#)
- Have a [Family Gratitude Challenge](#).
- Create a handmade gift for someone ([Get a list and planning sheets here](#))

A great resource for the creating a fun family gratitude challenge is this **7-Day Gratitude Challenge for Children**.

This challenge was free but is now part of the [Challenges Kit](#) shown below.

The "gratitude pages" are eight printable worksheets to be completed together as a family.

4. Practice Looking For The Good

Some people may not agree with me but I make sure that my children realize things come at a cost, *not just money wise*, but also to appreciate the time, effort, energy.

When they receive a gift that they may not be thrilled about (*example: That really ugly sweater!*) I let them know they can still say an **honest thank you**.

We do this by practicing looking for the good in things around us.

For example, "Wow, I won't be cold in this super-bulky sweater, Thanks for thinking of me!"

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You can do this by playing a game:

1. Hold up something
2. Ask your kids what they could say if someone gave them this item as a gift?
3. Brainstorm 3-5 positive expressions. Create a word cloud or list.
4. Whoever comes up with the most ways to be thankful wins!
5. Winner gets to pick the next time.

Remind them to focus on thought and not just the gift.

5 Create Thank You Notes!

Thank you notes give teenagers another way to express gratitude in a way that is comfortable for them.

Again, putting thoughts to words can be tough but if you can write it

down and hand it to someone it can be easier.

The great thing about Thank You Cards is that the person can read it again and again.

Making your own Thank You Notes can really allow your child to express their creativity.

Here are a few different resources for you to explore:

- Use [Reallycolor.com](https://reallycolor.com) to turn photos into cards. ([Learn more here](#))
- Use [Picmonkey!](#) (instructions & video below!)
- [Printable Thank You Cards](#) for kids.
- [Digital Thank You Cards](#)
- Create a thank you kit for kids (details below)

Create Your Own Card Using PicMonkey!

If you haven't heard of [PicMonkey](#) you are in for a treat!

It is an online photo editing, collage making, graphic design, creative outlet all rolled into one kinda deal. In other words, if you have a teen that likes to get creative and add their own special twist on things, this is the site for you!

How I use Picmonkey to create thank you cards:

Go to <https://www.picmonkey.com/> and follow along with this video!

I like written instructions as well:

1. At the top of the screen, you will find your choices. Click Edit, Touch Up, Design, or Collage. Under "Free Trial" you can also click "Details." If you want to edit a photo, click "Edit." If you want to make a design, [like I did in the video](#), click "Design."
2. **Note:** If you want to use a background image, you will have to choose the 'Edit' option and upload your image, instead of choosing design.
3. I clicked "Canvas Color" to get a background color.
4. Click "Apply..." to save what you did.
5. I clicked "Text" to write over my canvas.
6. Scroll down until you find a font that you want to use. Click it. You

will see a text box on your canvas you can edit.

7. To change your text appearance, highlight it then explore the box. You can change the color, alignment, size and more! Play around until you are happy with it and hit apply!
8. Next, explore the options on the left of the screen! There are too many to list



9. I chose "Frames," "Simple Edge." You can customize your card in so many ways.

10. When you are done playing with each setting remember to hit apply.
11. Lastly, click "Save," so it would save to your computer when done.

Now you can print it off and use, or email if you want! I like to print it off on card stock to make it sturdy. Give creative kids 5 minutes and they will be sharing all kinds of creative cards with you!

Note: There are paid plans that allow you to use more creative tools in picmonkey. I recommend signing up for the [free trial](#) and checking them out.



Thank You Kit for Your Teen:

Creating a Thank You Kit for your kids is easy and FUN!

You need:

- A box to put the items in
- Blank cards
- Thank You cards filled in for the non-creative days
- [Colorful Envelops](#)
- Card Stock
- [Stickers](#)
- Stamps
- Markers (I like [these sharpies](#))
- Anything else you think they like

Here is a neat [site you can use for younger](#) and maybe older children for teaching manners.

These are great supplies for them to go ahead and get creative. It also serves as a **no excuse not to say thank you**, as well as a reminder to do so.

My Amazon Picks

Don't be afraid to prompt them even when they are older to say thank you for things, big and little. From holding a door open to a receiving a gift.

Little ones forget, bigger ones get distracted. Be kind and respectful if possible, a nudge and a whisper so as not to embarrass but sometimes we all need reminders.

No worries, they will be happy to remind you as well!

How do you teach gratitude with your kids?

Take care,

Jen

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HOW TO TEACH

TEENAGERS ABOUT GRATITUDE



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