

Gratitude Balloon Toss

PLAY

To promote the life skill of gratitude by encouraging students to express appreciation while engaged in a playful balloon-tossing activity. Saturn, known for its beautiful rings, reminds us that grateful thoughts create connection and joy, circling outwards like ripples of kindness.



Learning Intentions

I can think of something I am thankful for:

This supports emotional awareness and appreciation.

I can take turns and listen while playing a group game:

This promotes cooperation and respectful communication.

I can share my gratitude in a fun and playful way:

This helps connect positive feelings to social experiences.



Success Criteria

I can name something I'm thankful for out loud:

This builds verbal confidence and recognition of the good in life.

I can safely toss and catch the balloon with my friends:

This improves coordination and teamwork.

I can listen to what others are thankful for:

This builds empathy and attentiveness.



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Objective:

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Players:

Ideal for 4–26 students in a safe, open space.

Materials:

- 1–2 large balloons (lightweight and safe for indoor use)
- Optional: Music for an added rhythm or pause function
- Optional: Visual cue cards with gratitude ideas (e.g., family, pets, nature)(you could brainstorm a list of things/people/experiences students feel grateful for).

Time Required:

10–15 minutes

Setup:

Begin by reading the Saturn page from *The Playful Astronauts*. Ask students:

- “What is gratitude?”
- “How does it feel when we say thank you?”
- “Why is it important to notice what we’re grateful for?”

Gather students in a large circle or open space. Blow up the balloon and explain the activity.



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Gameplay:

Step 1 – Hit and Thank:

Explain: "We're going to pass this balloon around the circle by hitting it in the air and not allowing it to hit the floor. But before you hit it towards a friend, you need to say one thing you are thankful for."

Demonstrate:

- "I'm thankful for my dog." *Hit the balloon in the air!*
- "I'm thankful for lunch." *Hit the balloon in the air!*

If students get stuck, you can prompt them with ideas:

- Someone in their family
- A toy they love
- A friend or classmate
- Something that made them smile today
- Something they are looking forward to
- Something fun that has happened to them

Keep the game light and joyful. The balloon can be bounced, tapped, or gently tossed.

Step 2 – Add a Challenge (Optional):

Introduce a second balloon or change direction mid-game to keep students engaged. You can also use music: when the music stops, the person holding the balloon shares something they're thankful for. Continue to add in more balloons if the students can keep them off the ground as a team (encourage teamwork!).

Step 3 – Reflection:

At the end of the activity, ask:

- "How did it feel to say things we're grateful for?"
- "Did anything someone else say make you smile too?"
- "Can we try doing this at home or with our family?"

Winning the Game:

There is no winner. The real reward is in expressing thankfulness and hearing others do the same, creating a ring of gratitude that connects everyone, just like Saturn's beautiful rings.

Additional Notes:

"Gratitude Balloon Toss" turns appreciation into a game of joy and connection. Students learn that gratitude is not only a quiet feeling. It can also be shared, celebrated, and bounced around a room like the most wonderful kind of energy. Just like Saturn's rings, our thankfulness circles back and brings us closer together.

