

Stretch and Say Thanks - Levels C - D

STAY ACTIVE

To support the life skill of gratitude by combining slow, gentle movement with thankful thinking. Inspired by Saturn, this activity encourages students to slow down, reflect, and notice the good things in their lives while regulating their bodies and emotions.

Learning Intentions

Students aim to move their bodies gently through simple stretches.

Students aim to think about things they feel thankful for.

Students aim to express gratitude using words, symbols, or actions while moving.

Success Criteria

I can copy or attempt gentle stretches with my body.

I can share or show something I am thankful for during the activity.

I can stay calm and focused while stretching with others.



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Duration: 10 - 15 minutes

Objective

To support the life skill of gratitude by combining slow, gentle movement with thankful thinking. Inspired by Saturn, this activity encourages students to slow down, reflect, and notice the good things in their lives while regulating their bodies and emotions.

Players

Whole class or small group
Suitable for 4 - 26 students

What You Need

Clear open space or soft mats
Optional calm background music (instrumental or nature sounds)
Optional gratitude cue cards (e.g. family, friends, pets, food, nature)
AAC devices or communication supports as required

Setup

1. Revisit the Saturn page from *The Playful Astronauts* using clear, concrete language:
 - "Saturn reminds us to slow down and think about good things."
 - "Gratitude means noticing what helps us and makes us feel good."
2. Ask one or two simple questions:
 - "What makes you smile?"
 - "Who helps you?"
3. Explain the activity:
 - "We will stretch our bodies slowly."
 - "With each stretch, we will think about or share something we are thankful for."
4. Model calm behaviour and slow movement before beginning.



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Gameplay

Step 1: Gentle Stretching

Model each stretch first. Students may stand or sit.

Suggested stretches:

- **Reach for the Stars:** Stretch arms up high
- **Rainbow Arms:** Lean gently side to side
- **Toe Reach:** Slowly reach arms down
- **Butterfly Arms or Legs:** Gentle flapping motion
- **Self-Hug:** Wrap arms around body

Students are encouraged to try each movement in a way that feels safe and comfortable.

Step 2: Add Gratitude

After modelling each stretch, prompt gratitude.

Examples:

- "While we reach up, think about something you are thankful for."
- "You can say it, point to a picture, or think it quietly."

Model responses:

- "I am thankful for my family."
- "I am thankful for my friends."

Students may:

- Say a word or short phrase
- Use AAC to select a gratitude word or symbol
- Point to a cue card
- Think silently or simply smile as they stretch and think about the good stuff

Participation is flexible and student-led (where applicable).

Step 3: Calm Finish

1. Finish with a wide arm stretch.
2. Guide one slow breath in and out.
3. Ask one reflection question:
 - "How does your body feel now?"



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Winning the Game

There are no winners or losers.

Students are successful when they engage with movement, gratitude, and calm participation in a way that suits them.

Sensory-Specific Learner Variation

Purpose: Support regulation and comfort.

Adjustments may include:

- Reducing number of stretches
- Slower pace and longer pauses
- Soft music or no music
- Allowing students to sit, lie down, or observe
- Using deep pressure movements such as self-hugs

Students may opt out of movement and participate through breathing or listening only.

AAC-Specific Supports

1. Prepare AAC Vocabulary

- Gratitude words: happy, family, food, play, home, school, friend

2. Model AAC Use

- Teacher models selecting “thankful” + item

3. Student Expression Options

- Single button messages
- Symbol selection
- Partner-assisted scanning

4. Non-Verbal Participation

- Students may activate AAC without movement
- Peers or adults acknowledge all contributions equally

Accessibility and Inclusion Notes

- All stretches can be completed seated or standing.
- Accept verbal, AAC, gesture, or silent participation.
- Ensure clear personal space for mobility aids.
- Avoid rushing between movements.
- Reinforce calm and safety throughout.

Teacher Notes

“Stretch and Say Thanks – Levels C & D” works well as a transition, regulation activity, or calm start/end to a session. It supports body awareness, emotional reflection, and gratitude in a predictable, low-pressure format. Linked to Saturn, the activity reinforces that slowing down helps us notice what matters most.

