

Stretch and Say Thanks - Levels F-3

STAY ACTIVE

To nurture gratitude and calm energy by combining simple stretches with spoken thankfulness. Saturn, the planet of reflection and balance, reminds us to slow down and appreciate the good things in our lives, even as we move and grow.



Learning Intentions

Students will practise moving their bodies through gentle stretches. This supports physical development, flexibility, and calmness.

Students will learn to think about and reflect on the things they are thankful for. This encourages emotional reflection and appreciation.

Students will practise saying kind and grateful words while they move. This builds confidence, mindfulness, and verbal expression.



Success Criteria

I can copy or try different stretches with my body.
This builds motor control and awareness.

I can say something I'm thankful for with each stretch.
This supports positive thinking and emotional expression.

I can stay calm and focused during the activity.
This encourages mindfulness and presence.



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Objective:

To nurture gratitude and calm energy by combining simple stretches with spoken thankfulness. Saturn, the planet of reflection and balance, reminds us to slow down and appreciate the good things in our lives, even as we move and grow.

Players:

Ideal for 4–26 students in an open space.

Materials:

- Soft mats or clear space for safe movement
- Optional: calming background music (instrumental or nature sounds)
- Optional: gratitude cue cards for inspiration (e.g., "family", "nature", "pets")(you can brainstorm a list as a class on the board)

Time Required:

10–15 minutes

Setup:

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

- "How does it feel when someone says "thank you" to you?"
- "What do you feel thankful for today?"

Explain that this activity is about moving gently and saying kind, thankful words while we stretch our bodies.

Gameplay:

Step 1 – Model the Stretches:

Demonstrate 4–6 gentle stretches the students will try, such as:

- **Reach for the Stars** – stand tall and stretch arms high
- **Rainbow Arms** – lean gently from side to side
- **Toe Touches** – stretch arms down slowly
- **Butterfly Wings** – sit and flap legs or arms like wings
- **Hug Yourself** – wrap arms around chest and squeeze

Step 2 – Add the Gratitude:

With each stretch, invite students to say one thing they are thankful for. Example:

- While stretching up: "I'm thankful for my mummy."
- While touching toes: "I'm thankful for pancakes."
- While sitting in butterfly pose: "I'm thankful for my friends."

Allow students to think quietly first if needed, or offer helpful prompts.



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Step 3 – Reflection and Breath:

End with one big group stretch (arms wide open), followed by a big breath in and out. Ask:

- “What was your favourite thankful stretch?”
- “How does your body feel now?”

Winning the Game:

There is no winner. Every student who stretches with intention and shares their gratitude has already succeeded. Just like Saturn, the focus is on calm, balance, and the joy of giving thanks.

Variations:

Circle of Gratitude:

Students form a circle and each person performs a stretch while saying one thing they're thankful for. Everyone else copies the movement and repeats the gratitude phrase aloud together.

Partner Version:

Students pair up. One partner performs a stretch and says something they're thankful for, while the other mirrors the stretch and says, “Thank you for sharing.” Switch roles after each round.

Music & Pause:

Play calming or instrumental music. When the music pauses, students freeze in a stretch and share one thankful thought before continuing.

Class Reflection Chain:

After each stretch, the next student begins with, “I'm thankful for [repeat previous idea] and also for...” building a shared chain of gratitude that connects the whole group.

Mindful Movement Flow:

For older students, turn the activity into a flowing sequence (e.g. Reach → Bend → Butterfly → Hug) with gratitude woven throughout, focusing on breathing, calmness, and flow.



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For Wheelchair Users / Accessibility:

- Adapt stretches for seated or supported movement (e.g. arm reaches, gentle side leans, shoulder rolls, hand circles).
- Provide visual cue cards or teacher modelling to support comprehension.
- Encourage students to use gestures, sign language, or assistive devices to express gratitude if verbal communication is difficult.
- Ensure adequate space between participants for mobility aids.
- Encourage stillness and breathing participation for students who may not wish or be able to stretch fully.
- Use music with soft rhythm to help maintain timing and engagement.

Notes for Inclusion:

- Emphasise that *there's no right or wrong way to stretch or share gratitude*. Every small movement and every kind word matters.
- Model vulnerability by sharing your own gratitude (e.g. "I'm thankful for the quiet moments we share together in this class.")
- For students who prefer not to speak, allow them to think silently or use visual cues (e.g. holding up a gratitude card or symbol).
- Reinforce kindness and safety, no rushing, pushing, or judging.
- Use positive affirmations throughout:
 - "That's a lovely stretch!"
 - "I can see you're really focused, well done!"
 - "That was such a thoughtful thing to say thank you for."
- Finish with a group affirmation:
 - "We are thankful, calm, and strong, just like Saturn's peaceful rings."

Additional Notes:

"Stretch and Say Thanks" gently blends movement and mindfulness, giving young learners a meaningful way to connect with their emotions and their bodies. Saturn teaches us that even in stillness, gratitude can grow, and through simple, loving stretches, students learn that thankfulness is something they can carry in every step, reach, and breath.

