

SEL THANKSGIVING GAMES



THANKSGIVING FREEZE DANCE

Children dance to music and must "freeze" in a Thanksgiving-themed pose when the music stops, taking turns calling out what they are grateful for when frozen.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS

★ Body awareness

★ Emotional expression

EQUIPMENT

- Music player (smartphone, speakers, etc.)
- List of Thanksgiving-themed poses (e.g., "Turkey", "Pilgrim", "Cornucopia")

GROUP SIZE

6+

★ INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Preparation:** Prepare a playlist of fun, danceable music suitable for a Thanksgiving-themed party.
2. **Introduction:** Gather the kids and explain that they will be playing a Thanksgiving-themed game.
3. **Dance Time:** Start playing the music and encourage the children to dance. When the music stops, they must freeze in a Thanksgiving-themed pose.
4. **Call to Freeze:** Randomly stop the music. When the music stops, call out a Thanksgiving-themed pose (e.g., "Turkey", "Pilgrim", "Cornucopia"). Children must freeze in that pose.



THANKFUL TURKEY CRAFT

Children create paper turkeys and attach "feathers" listing things they are grateful for, then share with the group.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS

★ Gratitude awareness

★ Self-expression

★ Active listening

EQUIPMENT

- Turkey body and feathers template (included)
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Markers or crayons

GROUP SIZE

1+

DIFFICULTY

● ● ● ● ●
Medium

★ INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Preparation:** Print the turkey body and feathers template on regular paper on regular or construction paper ahead of time. One template per child.
2. **Introduction:** Explain to the children that each feather represents something they are grateful for.
3. **Hand out Materials:** Give each child the template and have them cut out the turkey body and feathers.
4. **Writing Gratitude:** Ask the kids to write or draw something they are thankful for on each feather. Younger kids can draw pictures if they can't write yet. Example: "I am thankful for my family." "I am grateful for my friends." "I love my pet."
5. **Attaching Feathers:** Have kids glue or tape the feathers to the turkey body, then color in the completed turkey if needed.
6. **Sharing Circle:** Once everyone is done, gather in a circle. One by one, let each child introduce their "Thankful Turkey" and share one or two things they wrote on their feathers.
7. **Reflection:** After everyone has shared, facilitate a quick discussion on how it feels to be thankful and to listen to what others are grateful for.
8. **Display:** If possible, create a "Wall of Gratitude" where all the turkeys can be displayed.



COMPLIMENT CORNUCOPIAS

Children create paper cornucopias and fill them with written compliments or positive affirmations for their classmates.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS

★ Gratitude awareness

★ Self-esteem building

★ Empathy and kindness

★ Active listening

★ Emotional expression

★ Body awareness

★ Gratitude awareness

★ Self-esteem building

★ Empathy and kindness

★ Active listening

★ Emotional expression

★ Body awareness

★ Gratitude awareness

★ Self-esteem building

★ Empathy and kindness

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★ Empathy and kindness

★ Active listening

★ Emotional expression

★ Body awareness

★ Gratitude awareness

★ Self-esteem building

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our collection of SEL Thanksgiving Games! Thanksgiving and the broader theme of gratitude offer a rich context for activities that encourage SEL competencies.

From self-awareness to social awareness, these games touch upon foundational life skills, all set in the warm atmosphere of the season of giving thanks.

As you dive into this resource, here's what to expect:

- **Social & Emotional Skills:** Each game is crafted with a focus on certain SEL competencies. These core skills, integral for holistic development, are the backbone of our activities.
- **Equipment:** We understand the constraints of a classroom setting, so the required equipment and instructor materials have been kept standard and minimal, ensuring you spend less time prepping and more time playing.
- **Group Size:** While some games foster intimacy with smaller groups, others thrive on larger participation. We've indicated the minimum number of players needed, ensuring each game's success.
- **Difficulty:** Recognizing the varied skill set and adaptability of students, our games are rated from 1 (easiest) to 5 (hardest). This ensures that you can pick and choose based on the group's readiness and the setup available.
- **Instructions:** No more guessing games! Each activity comes with a detailed, step-by-step guide to ensure clarity and ease of execution.
- **Younger Kids:** The little ones have a special place in our hearts! We've provided modifications to simplify games, ensuring the younger minds remain engaged and intrigued.
- **Older kids:** As they grow, so do their appetites for challenge. Tailored modifications are available to make games more complex and thought-provoking for the mature students.

May this resource enrich your Thanksgiving celebrations, adding not just an element of fun but also fostering the critical social and emotional growth in your students. Dive in, explore, and let the essence of gratitude combined with the richness of SEL come to life!



THANKFUL TURKEY CRAFT

Children create paper turkeys and attach “feathers” listing things they are grateful for, then share with the group.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Gratitude awareness



Self-expression



Active listening

EQUIPMENT

- Turkey body and feathers template (included)
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Markers or crayons

GROUP SIZE



DIFFICULTY



INSTRUCTIONS

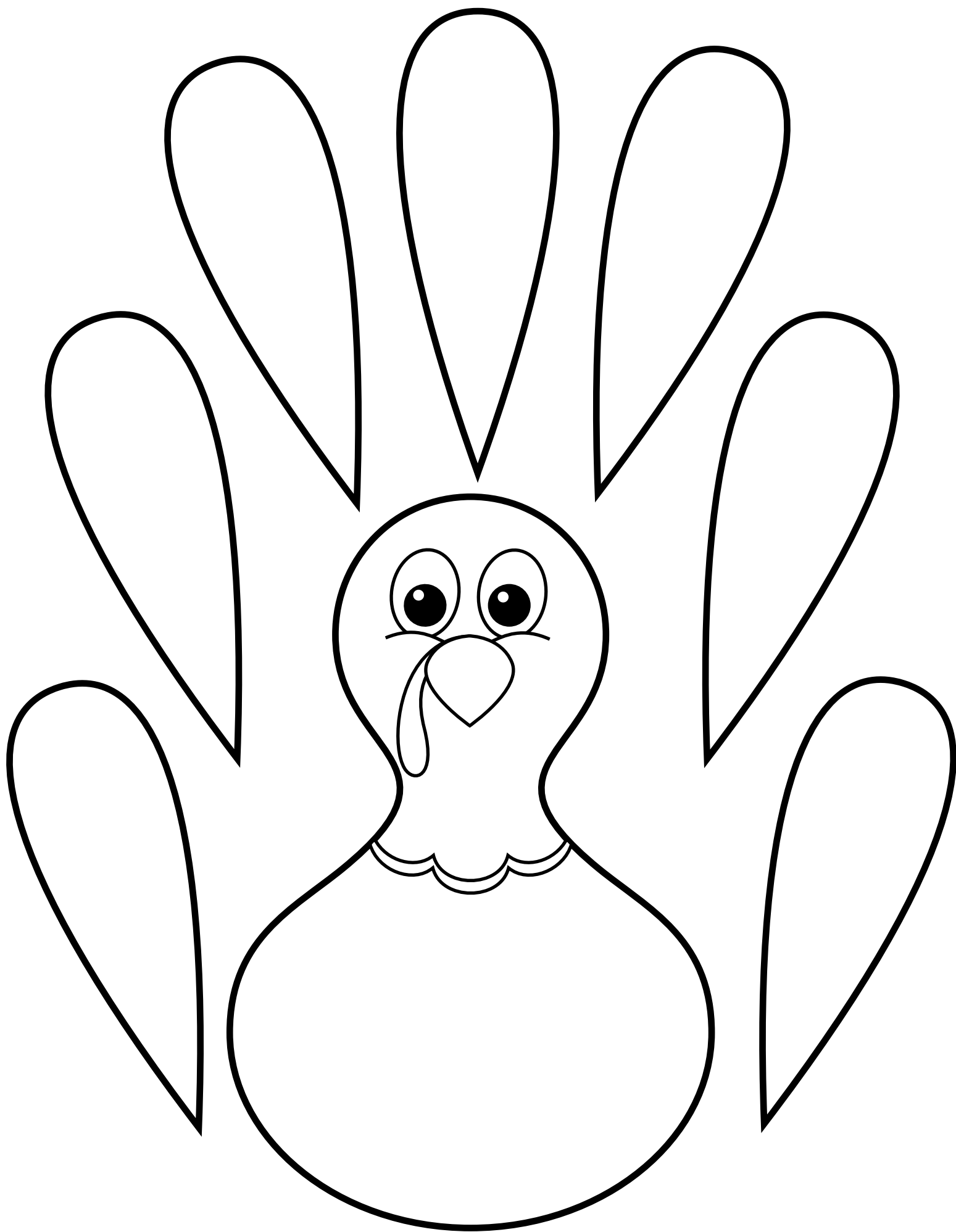
1. **Preparation:** Print the turkey body and feathers template on regular paper or construction paper ahead of time. One template per child.
2. **Introduction:** Explain to the children that each feather represents something they are grateful for.
3. **Hand out Materials:** Give each child the template and have them cut out the turkey body and feathers.
4. **Writing Gratitude:** Ask the kids to write or draw something they are thankful for on each feather. Younger kids can draw pictures if they can't write yet. Example: “I am thankful for my family,” “I am grateful for my friends,” “I love my pet.”
5. **Attaching Feathers:** Have kids glue or tape the feathers to the turkey body, then color in the completed turkey if needed.
6. **Sharing Circle:** Once everyone is done, gather in a circle. One by one, let each child introduce their “Thankful Turkey” and share one or two things they wrote on their feathers.
7. **Reflection:** After everyone has shared, facilitate a quick discussion on how it feels to be thankful and to listen to what others are grateful for.
8. **Display:** If possible, create a “Wall of Gratitude” where all the turkeys can be displayed.

YOUNGER KIDS

Pre-cut the turkey and feather shapes, and let them focus on drawing or dictating what they are grateful for to an adult helper.

OLDER KIDS

Older kids can write more complex sentences or even short paragraphs on their feathers, exploring why they are thankful for each item or person.





FRIENDSHIP SALAD

Children contribute “ingredients” in the form of positive qualities or actions that make a good friendship, mixing them together in a symbolic salad bowl made from a construction paper circle.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Relationship building



Communication skills



Teamwork

EQUIPMENT

- Large piece of construction paper to create the “bowl” (Or use a regular salad bowl)
- Small squares or circles of construction paper (as the “ingredients”)
- Writing utensils (markers, crayons, or pencils)

GROUP SIZE



DIFFICULTY



INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Preparation:** Cut out a large circle from construction paper to act as the “bowl” and prepare smaller squares or circles as the “ingredients.”
2. **Introduction:** Gather the kids and explain that they’re going to make a “Friendship Salad” by contributing positive qualities or actions that make a friendship strong.
3. **Bowl in the Center:** Place the large circle of construction paper in the center of the circle of kids, acting as the salad bowl.
4. **Brainstorming Session:** Give each child a small square or circle of construction paper and ask them to write or draw a quality that they think is important in a friend. Example: “Listening,” “Sharing,” “Being kind,” “Saying sorry when you’re wrong.”
5. **Adding Ingredients:** One by one, invite each child to walk up to the “bowl,” read out their quality, and place the paper in the circle.
6. **Discussion:** After everyone has contributed, discuss the various “ingredients” in the Friendship Salad. What makes these qualities or actions important in a friendship?
7. **Salad Mixing:** Once all “ingredients” are in, encourage children to use their hands to lightly “toss” the paper ingredients while summarizing the qualities and actions that have been discussed.
8. **Reflection:** Ask children to reflect on whether they already use these qualities in their friendships and if there’s something new they want to try.
9. **Optional Display:** If space allows, consider placing the circle and its “ingredients” on a wall or bulletin board as a visual reminder of the important qualities that make up good friendships.

YOUNGER KIDS

Simplify the game by providing pre-written qualities on the smaller squares or circles. They can choose the ones they agree with and place them in the “bowl.”

OLDER KIDS

Encourage deeper reflection by asking them to share personal examples of when they have demonstrated or experienced each quality in their friendships.



THANKSGIVING STORY RELAY

Children sit in a circle and create a cooperative Thanksgiving-themed story by contributing one sentence at a time, focusing on elements for which they're thankful.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Creative collaboration



Active listening



Gratitude awareness

EQUIPMENT

- A "talking stick" or similar object (could be a ruler, pipe cleaner, small toy, etc.)

GROUP SIZE

6+

DIFFICULTY



INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Introduction:** Gather the children in a circle and explain that they will be creating a story together about Thanksgiving. The twist is that each sentence should include something for which they are thankful.
2. **Talking Stick:** Introduce the "talking stick" and explain that only the person holding the stick may speak. This ensures everyone has a turn and is heard.
3. **Story Starter:** Start the story with a basic opening sentence related to Thanksgiving to set the scene. Example: "Once upon a time on Thanksgiving morning, Jaden woke up excited and thankful for the smell of pumpkin pie."
4. **Pass the Stick:** Pass the "talking stick" to the child to your left. They must add a sentence that continues the story and includes something for which they are thankful. Example: "He ran downstairs to find his grandma, who he is thankful for, cooking in the kitchen."
5. **Continue the Story:** Continue passing the stick around the circle, with each child adding a sentence that continues the story and incorporates an element of gratitude.
6. **Active Listening:** Encourage active listening by asking children to build upon previous sentences, incorporating elements introduced by others if possible.
7. **Story Conclusion:** When the stick returns to the starting person (the teacher or facilitator), conclude the story by tying up any loose ends.
8. **Reflection:** Facilitate a discussion about the experience, focusing on what elements the children were thankful for and how it felt to collaboratively create a story.

YOUNGER KIDS

For younger kids who may have difficulty forming sentences, they can contribute a word or short phrase that signifies something they're thankful for. Example: When the stick comes to them, they might say "puppy" if they're thankful for their pet.

OLDER KIDS

Challenge them to add more complex sentences or plot twists while still focusing on gratitude. They might also be tasked with remembering and summarizing the story's elements during the reflection phase.



COMPLIMENT CORNUCOPIAS

Children create paper cornucopias and fill them with written compliments or positive affirmations for their classmates.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Positive reinforcement



Self-esteem building



Empathy and kindness

EQUIPMENT

- Cornucopia template
- Fruits and vegetables template
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Writing utensils (markers, crayons, or pencils)

GROUP SIZE



DIFFICULTY



INSTRUCTIONS

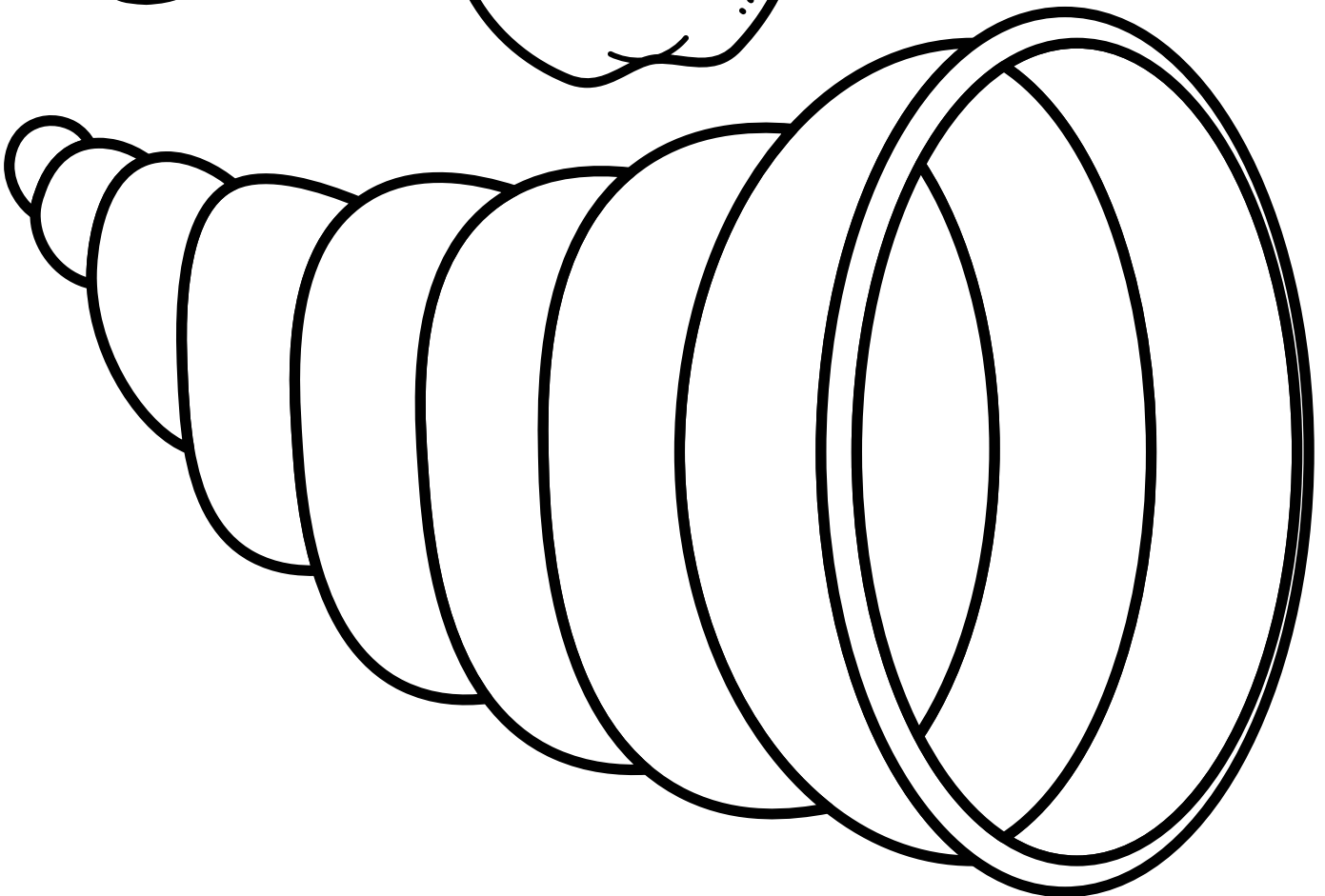
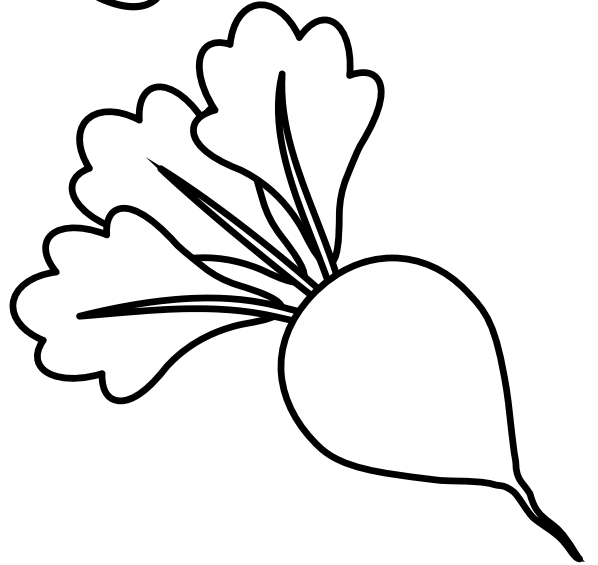
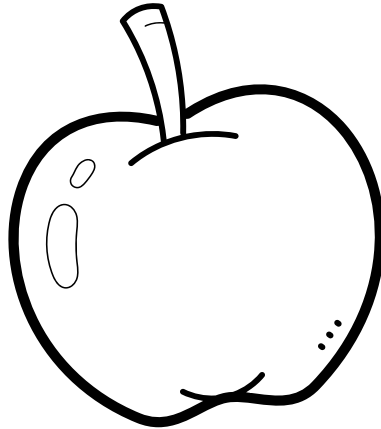
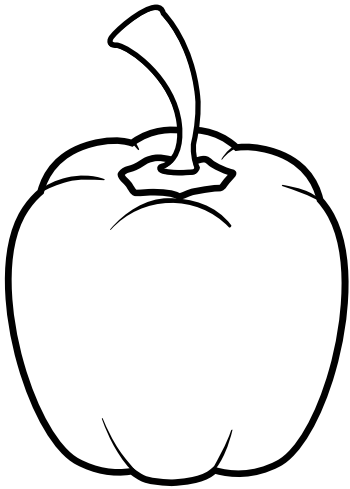
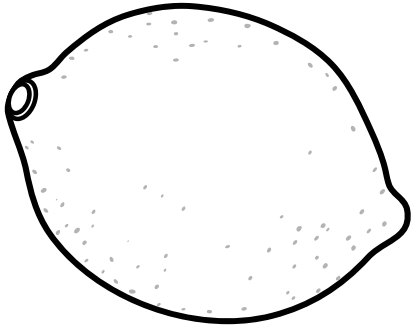
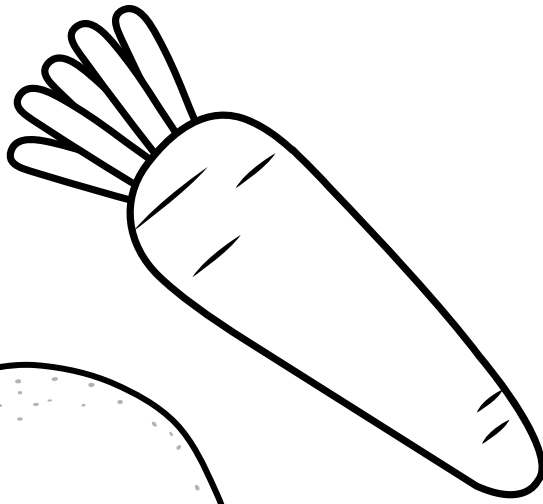
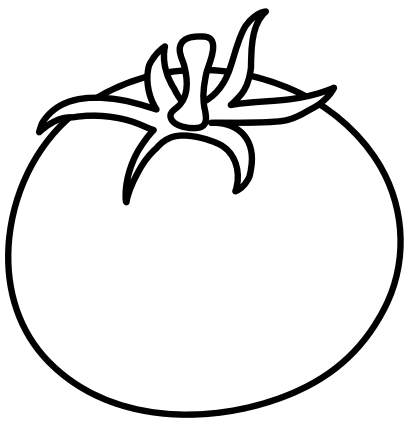
- 1. Preparation:** Print the cornucopia and fruits/vegetables template and hand one out to each child.
- 2. Introduction:** Explain to the children that they will be creating cornucopias filled with “fruits” and “vegetables,” which are actually compliments or affirmations for their classmates.
- 3. Cornucopia Assembly:** Distribute the brown cornucopia shapes and colored “fruits” and “vegetables” shapes to each child. Have them assemble their cornucopias by gluing or taping the colored shapes onto the brown shapes.
- 4. Writing Compliments:** Once the cornucopia is assembled, each child should write a compliment or positive affirmation on each “fruit” and “vegetable.”
Example: “You are kind,” “You make me laugh,” “You are good at math.”
- 5. Exchange and Fill:** Children then go around the room, exchanging compliments and placing them in each other’s cornucopias.
- 6. Completion:** When all cornucopias are filled, have the children return to their seats.
- 7. Sharing Circle:** Gather the children in a circle and ask volunteers to read one or two compliments they received and discuss how it makes them feel.
- 8. Reflection:** Facilitate a discussion on the importance of giving and receiving compliments and how it can make someone’s day better.

YOUNGER KIDS

Consider using pre-written compliments that they can choose from and glue into their cornucopias. Alternatively, they can draw pictures instead of writing.

OLDER KIDS

Encourage them to write more personalized compliments and possibly add why they think that compliment suits the person receiving it.





THANKSGIVING FREEZE DANCE

Children dance to music and must “freeze” in a Thanksgiving-themed pose when the music stops, taking turns calling out what they are thankful for when frozen.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Body awareness



Emotional expression



Gratitude awareness

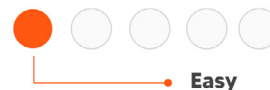
EQUIPMENT

- Music player (smartphone, speakers, etc.)
- List of Thanksgiving-themed poses (e.g., “Turkey”, “Pilgrim”, “Cornucopia”)

GROUP SIZE

6+

DIFFICULTY



INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Preparation:** Prepare a playlist of fun, danceable music suitable for children. Create a list of Thanksgiving-themed poses for the kids to imitate.
- 2. Introduction:** Gather the kids and explain that they will be playing a game of Freeze Dance with a Thanksgiving twist.
- 3. Dance Time:** Start playing the music and encourage the children to dance freely.
- 4. Call to Freeze:** Randomly stop the music. When the music stops, all children must “freeze” in one of the Thanksgiving-themed poses.
Example poses: “Turkey” (flap arms like wings), “Pilgrim” (hands in prayer position), “Cornucopia” (arms in a big circle like a horn).
- 5. Gratitude Moment:** While frozen, pick one or two children to share something for which they are thankful.
- 6. Resume Dancing:** Once the children have shared, restart the music and the game continues.
- 7. Keep Playing:** Repeat steps 4-6 multiple times, allowing different children to share their thoughts on gratitude.
- 8. Wrap-up:** End the game with a short discussion, asking children how it felt to share what they’re thankful for and to hear what others are thankful for.

YOUNGER KIDS

For younger children who may not fully understand all the Thanksgiving-themed poses, you can simplify by using only basic poses like standing on one leg or making a funny face.

OLDER KIDS

You can add complexity by having them also explain why they’re thankful for the things they mention. You could also have them create their own Thanksgiving-themed poses.



GRATITUDE QUEST

Students work in teams to complete a series of gratitude-related challenges around the classroom or outdoor space.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Gratitude awareness



Teamwork



Problem-solving

EQUIPMENT

- Index cards with pre-written challenges
- Writing utensils
- Small prizes (optional)

GROUP SIZE

12+

DIFFICULTY



INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Preparation:** Write a series of gratitude-related challenges on index cards. These could be questions that prompt gratitude, mini activities, or even drawing tasks. Examples: "Compliment a classmate," "Take a deep breath and think of one thing you're thankful for," "Write a thank you note to your parents," "Draw something you're grateful for," etc.
2. **Introduction:** Explain to the children that they are going on a "Gratitude Quest" to complete a series of challenges.
3. **Team Formation:** Divide the students into small teams of 2-3.
4. **Challenge Distribution:** Scatter the index cards face down around the classroom or outdoor space.
5. **Start the Quest:** On your mark, teams will go to different cards, pick one up, and complete the challenge written on it.
6. **Time Limit:** You can set a time limit if you wish (e.g., 20 minutes) or continue until all challenges have been completed by at least one team.
7. **Completion:** Once a team completes a challenge, they can seek out another index card to continue their quest.
8. **Sharing and Reflection:** At the end, gather the teams back together and ask them to share one meaningful thing they discussed or discovered during their quest.

YOUNGER KIDS

Simplify the challenges and use more visuals for younger children. For example, "Draw a picture of your favorite animal and say why you're thankful for it."

OLDER KIDS

You can include challenges that require a deeper level of reflection or more complicated tasks, such as writing a short thank you note to someone they are grateful for.



GRATITUDE “GUESS WHO?”

In this guessing game, students write down anonymous notes about someone they're thankful for in class, and the group has to guess who the note is about.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Gratitude awareness



Social awareness



Deductive reasoning

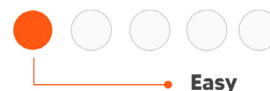
EQUIPMENT

- Small pieces of paper
- Pencils or pens
- Hat or bowl

GROUP SIZE

6+

DIFFICULTY



INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Preparation:** Provide each student with a small piece of paper and a writing utensil.
2. **Introduction:** Explain to the students that they are going to write an anonymous note about someone in the class they are thankful for. They should not write their own names on the paper.
3. **Writing Time:** Allow a few minutes for everyone to write their notes. Example: “I am thankful for this person because they always make me laugh,” or “This person helped me when I was struggling with math.”
4. **Collection:** Collect the anonymous notes in a hat or bowl.
5. **Guessing Game:** Pull one note out of the hat and read it aloud to the class.
6. **Group Discussion:** Let the class discuss and guess who the note might be about. The person who wrote the note should remain quiet during this time.
7. **Reveal:** Once a consensus or a few guesses have been made, ask the author of the note to reveal themselves and explain why they wrote what they did.
8. **Continue:** Keep going until all notes have been read, discussed, and revealed.

YOUNGER KIDS

You can simplify the notes to phrases like, “This person shares toys,” or “This person is nice,” to make it easier for younger students to participate.

OLDER KIDS

Encourage more detailed and thoughtful notes to provide a challenge for older students and to facilitate a deeper discussion on gratitude.



GRATITUDE MEMORY MATCH

A spin on the classic memory match game, where students turn over cards to find matching pairs of things people might be thankful for.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Gratitude awareness



Memory and concentration



Turn-taking

EQUIPMENT

- Gratitude Memory Match Cards (provided)
- Tables or floor space to lay out the cards

GROUP SIZE

6+

DIFFICULTY



INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Preparation:** Print the Memory Match Cards on the next page. Fill out the cards with people, places or things the students are grateful for. Make sure there are two of each to enable matching. Shuffle the cards and lay them face down on tables or the floor.
- 2. Introduction:** Explain to the students that they will be playing a memory match game where the objective is to find matching pairs of cards that represent things people might be grateful for.
- 3. Gameplay:** Divide the students into small groups and assign each group to a set of cards. Players take turns flipping over two cards to see if they match.
- 4. Discussion:** When a match is found, the student who found the match should briefly explain why someone might be thankful for the item or concept represented on the cards.
- 5. Continuation:** The game continues until all the matching pairs are found.
- 6. Reflection:** Gather the class to discuss the different elements they matched and what they learned about gratitude from the game.

YOUNGER KIDS

Use simpler ideas like “pets” and “friends.”

OLDER KIDS

Include more abstract concepts on the cards like “freedom,” “education,” or “health,” and ask for more detailed explanations when matches are found.

GRATITUDE MEMORY MATCH CARDS

I AM GRATEFUL FOR

I AM GRATEFUL FOR

I AM GRATEFUL FOR

I AM GRATEFUL FOR

I AM GRATEFUL FOR

I AM GRATEFUL FOR

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