

Grades 3-5 Thanksgiving Shamash Family Activity

Created by Stephanie Marshall



The #ShineALight Initiative

The #ShineALight Initiative is a national project to create a collective light of celebration spreading the Jewish joy of Chanukah and the beautiful traditions we honor in our homes with our families.

Sponsored in part by the UJA-Federation of New York, the initiative is designed as a counter-expression to antisemitism and other messages of hate acts towards Jews and Israel. The #ShineALight Initiative is leveraging education, community partnerships, workplace engagement, and advocacy among Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

The Jewish Education Project is a proud content partner of the #ShineALight Initiative and is delighted to provide these free materials to parents and other caring adults. We encourage you to utilize this education content in the week leading up to and through Chanukah (this year and in the future), and if applicable, at other times of the year.

Parent/Adult Background Information

A Chanukiah is the menorah used during Chanukah - it has nine candle holders while a regular menorah has only seven. The shamash is the helper candle. We use this one to light the other candles each night. The shamash holder is usually higher than the other candle holders on the chanukiah. On traditional Chanukiyot (plural) the shamash is in the middle but this is not always the case with more modern and artistic designs. On more modern Chanukiyot, the shamash is sometimes on one side or the other, and maybe a little forward or set back from the other candle holders.

You might have heard the word shamash as shammes - it is the same word, just different pronunciations.

We suggest reading through the whole activity guide and drafting the questions in a way that fits your style and that of your child. The expected answers are in parentheses after most of the questions. You might need to guide your child a bit as they consider their responses.

[There are few items on the Supply List included below that you may need/want to purchase.]



Social Media: If you are comfortable, we would love for you to spread the joy your family is experiencing while participating in this activity. Please take photos and/or videos and share them to your social media platforms using the hashtag #ShineALight.



Prep Time: 10 minutes

Activity Time: 30 minutes

Supplies

- All of the Chanukiyot in your home (some families use one for the whole family, other families have one per person) and you can invite Thanksgiving guests to bring one of theirs as well.
- A long table to hold all of the Chanukiyot
- A computer with internet access (optional)



Grades 3-5 Thanksgiving Shamash Family Activity



Activity Instructions

1. Set up all of the collected Chanukiyot on a table (or multiple tables).
2. Have your child/ren and other family members look at the Chanukiyot (Chanukah menorahs) in a slow “museum walk” and identify the shamash (helper candle) holder on each of your Chanukiyot.
3. If you would like, you can also look at images of Chanukiyot online. Here are some virtual museum galleries:
 - a. **Israel Museum in Jerusalem’s** exhibit titled “In the Palm of your Hand” Look at Chanukiyot from around the world. A [clickable map](#) showcases Chanukiyot from around the world in this exhibit.
 - b. **The Jewish Museum in New York’s** extensive [menorah collection](#).
4. Family discussion:
 - a. “What does the shamash do? What is its job? (We use it to light the other candles, it is the first candle lit each night)
 - b. What do you notice about the shamash holder? (It is taller than the other candles, it is a little separate from the other candles, etc. Help your child get to the idea of the shamash standing out.)
 - c. Why do you think the shamash is different from the other candles? (Because it has a job, so you can put the candle in without burning yourself/while staying safe,so you can tell which one is the shamash, it helps all the other candles, etc.)
 - d. How can we be like the shamash? How can we stand out? As unique individuals? As Jews?
 - e. What are the benefits of outwardly expressing our pride and joy in Judaism? (We let people see and understand a little bit more about Judaism, we let others see that Judaism is cool, we let others see that there is not only one holiday around this time of year, etc.)
 - f. How can we lead like the shamash? In our family? In our school/work? In our local community? In our larger society? (We can stand up and speak out, we can be the first to volunteer or speak up)
 - g. Just like the shamash helps us add light each night of Chanukah, how can we add light to our community? (Help our neighbors, volunteer for community activities, don’t let others bully someone else,etc.)
 - h. What might being a shamash, and leading with light, have to do with Thanksgiving? (Showing gratitude through action, being a part of an extended family or community, being thankful for our Judaism, etc.)
5. Don’t forget to upload photos and/or videos of this activity to your social media platforms using the hashtag #ShineALight.