

# A PARENT'S GUIDE TO CREATING QUALITY TIME

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Spending quality time with your child has more to do with ordinary daily life than fancy parties and complicated projects. It's simple and meaningful interactions, like bedtime stories and family dinners, that are essential for your child's development and future relationships.

As a parent, you're preparing them for academic success and rewarding careers. You're also helping to set the patterns for their adult friendships and romances.

Even if you feel like you're short on time and juggling multiple responsibilities at home or the office, **there are many opportunities to incorporate quality time into your daily routines.** Start with these practical ideas.

## General Principles for Quality Time:

- 1. Be authentic.** Do you feel a little guilty when you see Facebook posts from parents who take their children on exotic vacations or treat them to expensive hobbies? Instead of making comparisons, it's more constructive to focus on activities that suit your family budget and lifestyle.
- 2. Pay attention.** Let your child know how much you care about them. Listen closely to what they have to say. When you're together, **try to be fully present** instead of looking at your phone or thinking about your to do list.
- 3. Show appreciation.** Give your child plenty of praise and positive reinforcement. Congratulate them when they bring their grades up in a subject that has been difficult for them. Thank them for being patient with their younger siblings or

for setting the table without being asked.

4. **Discover their interests.** Find out what your child likes to do, so you can participate too. You may both enjoy playing video games or listening to bluegrass music.
5. **Make updates.** Remember that your child's needs will change over time. As they grow from a toddler into a teen, they expect more independence, but they'll probably still welcome an invitation to practice driving or watch a favorite sport.
6. **Remain available. Quality time can happen anywhere.** You're bound to find promising opportunities as long as you make yourself accessible.

#### **Practical Examples of Quality Time:**

1. **Eat family meals.** Dine together as often as possible. If you run into frequent conflicts with weekday dinners, try gathering for breakfast or catching up on weekends.
2. **Share chores.** Ask your children to join you when you're shopping for groceries or painting the garage. **You'll have a chance to talk, and they'll learn valuable life skills.**
3. **Schedule one-on-one time.** Arrange to spend some individual time with each of your children on a regular basis. You'll learn more about them and enjoy meaningful conversations that you would otherwise miss.
4. **Travel together.** Family vacations and driving to soccer practice both provide time to talk while you're on your way to your destination. Check in with each

other and let the conversation flow naturally.

5. **Volunteer as a family.** Helping others can draw you closer to your children.

**Support a cause you both care about** or browse online for a local volunteer clearinghouse where you can explore your options.

6. **Take pictures.** Face to face communications are the most significant but sharing pictures can help you stay in touch too. Send each other funny or moving images you come across during your day. Build an album you can look through together.

7. **Connect daily.** Even if you work outside the home and see your child for only a few hours most days, **quality time pays off as long as you're consistent.** Make it a habit to chat for about 15 minutes when you arrive home or before you go to bed.

Use quality time to build a positive relationship with your child and give them a solid foundation for becoming a happy and productive adult. Savor the moments you spend together and create memories you both will cherish.