

150 Things Dads Can Do for Their Kids

There are a lot of things that we can do for our kids if we just think about it for awhile. You may already be doing many of these things. Some you may not have considered. The important thing is that you're thinking about improving who you are as a father.

As you go through this list, choose the ones that fit your family needs first. Each new idea or activity can help to spark a new and improved relationship with your kids.

It's a long list, you may want to keep a snack handy. Here they are:

- 1. Set up rituals in your family and hold to them**
- 2. Ask them their opinion on things**
- 3. Create a family play or skit**
- 4. Get down to their level when possible—squat, kneel, or sit if needed**
- 5. Ask a lot of questions about their friends—get to know their world**
- 6. Take a walk with them**
- 7. Tell them you love them at least once a day**
- 8. Tell them what you expect of them in a clear manner**
- 9. Give them praise, but be gentle with your corrections of them**
- 10. Let them know about you and your history**
- 11. Give them tons of hugs**
- 12. Take on new jobs together as a team**
- 13. Be honest with them, unless they're not ready to hear something**
- 14. Call your kids from work and tell them you miss them**
- 15. Listen to them with all your attention and reflect back what they said**
- 16. Show your excitement when you see them—every time if you can.**
- 17. Have a smile on your face often**
- 18. Get them involved in your conversations if you can**
- 19. Introduce your child to friends and tell them something about your child**
- 20. Enjoy doing nothing with them and make time for doing nothing**
- 21. Figure out and make decisions together**
- 22. Allow them to be kids, don't get into the "stern parent" thing**
- 23. When they accomplish something, be their biggest booster**
- 24. Laugh at their jokes, even when they're not funny**
- 25. Participate in their fantasy play—be a prince in a castle in the woods**
- 26. Have high expectations for them—but be satisfied when it's not perfect**
- 27. Make plans to spend time together as a family**
- 28. Eat as many meals together as you can**
- 29. Help them to become really good at something**
- 30. Build something with them and let them make decisions**
- 31. Keep work separate from home—be available to them**
- 32. Make your home feel like a safe environment for them**
- 33. Let them participate in household chores—even when they're very young**
- 34. Be silly with them**
- 35. Hide treasures and surprises for them to find around the house**

36. Do the things that they like to do
37. When you do errands take them along and let them help somehow
38. Treat their mistakes as opportunities to learn
39. When they start something, be there to follow their lead
40. Put their artwork around the house for all to see
41. Say “thank you” when they do something for you
42. Laugh really hard with them
43. Keep written memories of the things they do and say when they’re young
44. Share your feelings with them
45. Treat your wife really well—show them how it’s done
46. Be very consistent with them but stay flexible
47. Tell them about the things that are important to you
48. Let them know about your faith
49. Ask them curious questions rather than telling them what to do all the time
50. Get them out in nature whenever you can
51. Involve them in your extended family—show how a community really works
52. Gently repeat what you want them to do, especially for young kids
53. Stay away from excessive TV viewing—they’ll know they’re more important than the TV
54. Say no frequently but in a loving manner
55. Tell stories to them about your childhood
56. Get your parents or other family members to tell them stories too
57. Tell your kids often how important they are to you
58. Ask for their suggestions and use them when possible
59. Show them how to help other people—model it for them
60. Surprise them by showing up when you’re not expected
61. Use the car as a great place for conversations
62. Get to know their friends and be nice to them
63. Have your own secrets you share with them
64. Tell them you’re sorry when you screw up
65. Remember you have two ears and one mouth—do more listening
66. Be at their events, tell them what you thought about it
67. Listen and learn from them—let them know what you learned
68. Keep your promises to them, no matter what
69. Tell them what you like about them specifically
70. Tell them what they can do, not what they can’t do
71. Wrestle with your kids—girls or boys
72. Cook meals with them, let them help
73. Show them you have domestic capabilities—help around the house
74. Be vulnerable—show them men can be both gentle and fierce
75. Find something in common you can do together
76. Make a great effort to see things from their perspective
77. Talk to their teacher and get their perspective
78. Be involved in their school and be an advocate

79. **Figure out their learning style and help them learn most efficiently**
80. **Give them space or time when they need it**
81. **Set boundaries and enforce them**
82. **Train them in the proper behavior and practice it with them.**
83. **Let them play the music and show some interest in it.**
84. **Read with them often**
85. **Believe what they tell you and stand behind them**
86. **Realize that you're often the problem if you blame them—practice being blame-free**
87. **Keep their life relatively simple**
88. **Don't try to be right so much**
89. **Be kind instead of right.**
90. **Take their hand when you walk with them**
91. **When you talk to them, look them in the eye**
92. **Have a secret code you use with them**
93. **Write letters to them—send them in the mail**
94. **Have family meetings and include them in the decisions**
95. **Limit their activities, especially when they're young—mostly they need you**
96. **Don't give them violent video games just because the Jones' do—find alternatives**
97. **Take a serious look at your kids perspective—it's as legitimate as yours**
98. **Hang out with your kids in a relaxed way**
99. **Respond to their misbehavior with gentleness and firmness**
100. **See them as capable all the time—even when they screw up**
101. **Educate yourself about their culture**
102. **Keep their number of toys and gifts at a moderate number**
103. **Don't intervene in your kids fighting-let them figure it out themselves**
104. **Remember the important things from their lifetime—birthdays, first steps, first day of school, etc.**
105. **Teach them about a “mistakes as learning” philosophy in life**
106. **Use choices with them**
107. **Use a plan when you're angry--leave, breathe; show them self-control**
108. **When things are tense, only talk to them when everyone's calmed down**
109. **Learn to interpret what you're child's saying underneath their words**
110. **Say, “That must be hard” to them often. It's better than, “please quit whining.”**
111. **Never do things for your kids that they can do for themselves**
112. **Improve your relationship with your own dad—it will help your own relationship with your kids**
113. **Give your kids time outs when they misbehave without making it punishment—just time to work through feelings until they're ready to come back**
114. **Help with their homework and be available for them**
115. **Have five positive interactions with them to every one negative one**

116. Use natural consequences with them—if they're slow to get ready for bed—no stories!
117. Show them what you do at work—take them with you some day if possible
118. Let them pick the discussion topic for dinner
119. Have your own “secret passwords” with each of them
120. Give them back massages or scratches—let them know the wonder of touch
121. Ask them what they'd like more of from you
122. Talk about the book you read together
123. Hang the telephone up during dinner
124. Play musical instruments with them—form a band
125. Teach basic first aid to your kids
126. Teach basic emergency procedures and fire safety to your kids
127. Tell your stories to them by candlelight
128. Tell them about your family tree
129. Write a poem about them and read it to them
130. Slow down your life enough so that you can enjoy and be with your kids
131. Draw pictures with them--do art projects together
132. Watch a kid-friendly movie together and talk about it afterward
133. Play silly rhyme games with them; see how many you can come up with
134. Give them money to take care of by themselves
135. Teach them about saving, spending, and donating money
136. Help them to make the house a place where other kids like to play
137. Build them a tree house or fort where they can have a “secret” place
138. Let them cook a meal—then enjoy what they made
139. Let them choose what the meal is once a week—as long as it's reasonable
140. Brainstorm with them about how to make things in the family better
141. Find out who their heroes are—talk about why they are heroes
142. Spend some time together helping others less fortunate than you—show them that this is a part of your life
143. Teach them about how to take care of themselves when other kids are mean
144. Share a story from your childhood about reacting to someone mistreating you
145. Contribute to the collections that they've made
146. Be fascinated by the things that they find interesting—small rocks, insects, etc.
147. Let them be in charge of something that's alive—a flower, fish, plant, etc.
148. Tell them that it's OK to be angry with you but not OK to be disrespectful to you
149. Give them something from you that symbolizes your love for them
150. Treat every day with them like it might be your last—let them know how much they're loved

I hope you're able to use some of these and that this list stimulated some ideas of your own about things you can do for your kids. It's never too late to improve as a father.

Congratulations for moving in the right direction!

Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC, is the author of "25 Secrets of Emotionally Intelligent Fathers" (<http://www.markbrandenburg.com/father/htm>). For more great tips and action steps for fathers, sign up for his FREE bi-weekly newsletter, Dads, Don't Fix Your Kids, at <http://www.markbrandenburg.com>.

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