



Make Life Grand

Five activities grandparents and their grandkids can do together.

By Sandy Bornstein

My two-year-old grandson, Avram, toddled to the coffee table and picked up a photo book filled with pictures from our last visit together. He brought it to me and crawled up in my lap.

Together we looked through the pages. “This!” he would say and point at a photo he wanted me to read about.

Sharing this time with Avram is precious, especially since he and his parents live halfway around the world in India. I have created photo books that I share with my grandsons who live in Denver as well, and the time we spend together looking at these books gives us a chance to connect on a deeper level.

Whether your kids’ grandparents live nearby or far away, creating opportunities for them to spend more time together will help foster meaningful relationships on both sides.

START A GRAND BOOK CLUB

Few moments compare to a young child nestling on a grandparent’s lap to share a book. This time together creates more than just quality cuddle time; reading and talking about books has a profound effect on the development of a child’s vocabulary, development, and communication skills. Grandparents can give parents a storytime break and connect with their grandkids by participating in a multigenerational book club.

Whenever possible, kids and their grandparents can select books together or alternate making suggestions. With older children, write up a few questions for book club meet-ups and consider serving a treat inspired by the events or time period of the book.

***Across the Miles:** Don’t cross this idea off the list just because of the miles between grandparents and grandkids. Online video calls through Skype or FaceTime make reading together and discussing books possible, even if you can’t curl up in a chair together.*

PLAY A FAVORITE GAME

In a world of Fortnite, YouTube, and binge watching television, kids may not be familiar with the simple games and activities that their grandparents played at the same age. Ask grandparents to think of an activity they loved as a kid—marbles, kick the can, fishing—and set a time for kids and grandparents to enjoy it together. In turn, grandkids can teach grandparents a simple computer game or how to take a selfie.

***Across the Miles:** This one is a little harder to do when there are miles in between, but grandparents can pose a challenge, or invite their grandchildren to learn about an activity and try it out on their own. Suggest that grandkids document it in their own unique style, through video or photos. Then they can share their experiences with each other during a call or visit.*

COOK FAMILY RECIPES

Food brings families together at mealtimes, on special occasions, and holidays. To preserve food traditions, kids and their grandparents can share favorite family recipes or launch a cookbook project that showcases the recipes—old and new—with stories to accompany them.

School-age grandkids can show off their computer and photography skills by designing a book for the recipes online. Younger kids can contribute artwork or stories to illustrate their favorite recipes.

***Across the Miles:** Grandparents and grandkids who are separated by distance can cook or bake the recipes on their own and easily add pages to a shared digital cookbook using services like Google Drive, Shutterfly, and Dropbox.*

SHARE FAMILY MEMORIES

Photos are a powerful springboard to storytelling. Share your favorite family photos and talk about the memories they trigger. For a lasting memento, produce a family memory book on the computer or in a three-ring binder. Include both new and old photographs, a family tree, pictures of family keepsakes, and descriptions of family traditions. Family members can each add their favorite items to the collection.

***Across the Miles:** Share some of these special photos and memories during a family get-together or via Skype or FaceTime.*

PLAN A MULTIGENERATIONAL VACATION

If time and budget allow, plan a trip together. Multigenerational trips allow family members, both near and far, to spend quality time together at a fun destination. Brainstorm a wish list for vacation destinations, keeping budgetary constraints of both generations in mind. Compromise on a location and find activities that everyone will enjoy.

Consider renting a condominium or house with a kitchen for cost savings and more family time. Cook together, share downtime, and participate in bedtime rituals. Cruise ships or resorts appeal to families that might have different ideas on how to spend their vacation time, but would like to gather as a group for meals or for certain activities.

***Across the Miles:** This may be the perfect solution for families separated by distance. Meeting up to vacation together gives everyone a chance to relax far from the distractions of daily chores and responsibilities that can interfere with time spent together.*

Sandra Bornstein is a Denver-based writer and grandmother of three, with a couple more on the way.

5 More GRAND Ideas

- Plant a garden together
- Plan a monthly Grands-only outing
- Visit a hometown or family home
- Explore a hobby side-by-side
- Walk or hike together