

Grandparenting at a distance

Although you may have to work a little harder when your family lives away, you can still have a strong relationship with your grandchildren. Letters, postcards, Skype, email, Facebook, treats, traditions, phones and stories – there are many ways to keep in touch. The important thing is helping your grandchildren feel as if they matter to you more than anybody else on the face of the earth – irrespective of the time spent with them.

Step-grandchildren

A relationship between a child and a new step-grandparent is like any other – it takes time to build trust, so be prepared to take this gradually. Acknowledge to yourself that it's normal to feel closer to your natural grandchildren, but do your best not to show favouritism. Spend time with them and try to be a friend to them.



Helping you to be an even better parent and grandparent



For more information and tips on family life, visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk

You might like to:

- **Read** *The Sixty Minute Grandparent* by Rob Parsons www.careforthefamily.org.uk/shop
- **Listen** to our regular *Parentalk Podcast* www.careforthefamily.org.uk/parentalk-podcast
- **Visit** the parenting section of our website www.careforthefamily.org.uk/parenting for advice and tips

Care for the Family is a registered charity and has been working to strengthen family life since 1988. Our aim is to promote strong family relationships and to help those who face family difficulties.

For information on the wider work of Care for the Family visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk

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Top Tips For Parents



Grandparents



There are all sorts of grandparents, but whether you're a full-time grandparent, a step-grandparent, or a long distance grandparent, you'll want to be the best grandparent you can be. Here are some tips that can help you have a loving relationship with your children and grandchildren that will enrich both their lives and yours.

During the pregnancy

Respect your children's feelings about the pregnancy, keeping it secret for a while if that's what they want, and be supportive in their plans for the birth even if you don't agree with it. During pregnancy – and throughout your grandchild's life – your important role is to be that of 'encourager' to their parents.

The first few weeks

Give the new family time together to bond and don't over-visit. Don't 'pop in' unannounced unless you're sure the parents will welcome this. Sometimes, perhaps if the father is not involved or the birth has been particularly difficult, then Mum or both parents will need all the support you can give, but even then, give this in a way that doesn't suffocate.

Don't criticise the new parents, even if only by implication: "Oh, he's never any trouble when I have him." Give them all the love and you can.

The other grandparents

Try to build a good relationship with the other set of grandparents and don't compete over who sees the child most or who's the most loved grandparent. Remember that after the birth it's normal for a new mum to turn to her own mother.

Giving advice

Be available to the parents for advice, but never give it unless asked. It's easy for unsolicited advice to come across as criticism, and there's a fine line between caring and interfering. Remember that times change and different things work for different people. Offer any advice with a touch of vulnerability. Suggesting, for example, "I think this might have helped when I couldn't get you to sleep" rather than pronouncing, "I never had this trouble with you!" is more helpful for the parents to handle.

Buying presents

At birthdays and Christmas, try to coordinate present-giving through your grandchildren's parents. You'll want to give them treats, but don't buy gadgets or toys that their parents don't want them to have.

Babysitting and childcare

Decide carefully how much babysitting you are prepared to take on and don't rush into long-term child care. You will naturally want to help your children out, but they shouldn't take this for granted.

Make sure your house is safe when your grandchildren are there – medicines, plugs, ponds, chemicals, sheds, stairs, pets etc.

Build your grandchild's confidence

Do all you can to build your grandchildren's confidence and self-esteem. Give them the gift of unconditional love, letting them know that in a world that can bully, judge and demand more and more of them, there's somebody who simply loves them.

Spending time with your grandchildren

Give your grandchildren as much love and attention as you can. They don't care how cool you are: they are just pleased you have time for them. Be an 'emotional safety net' in the life of a teenager.

Listen to them and let them know you will be honest with them. Unless they or others are in danger, always keep their confidences. Spend as much time as you can with each of your grandchildren one-to-one to grow your bond and give them space where they don't have to compete.

Discipline

Respect the method of discipline that the parents have chosen. Of course, you'll want to 'spoil' your grandchildren occasionally, but do this without undermining your own children. Aim for consistency with their parents with regard to rules for television, sweets, bedtimes, discipline.

