

A child in a blue shirt and jeans is sitting on a grey armchair, holding a small brown dog. The background is slightly blurred, showing a striped shirt and a blue bag.

# Five Activities For Visiting Grandkids

By Freedom Chevalier

Sometimes visiting grandma and granddad can be a little intimidating, especially if you no longer live in a large family home. What might be new sights and sounds can be unfamiliar to young eyes and ears, but that doesn't have to mean an uncomfortable visit. These five activities will have your little visitors feeling right at home and have you making long-lasting memories in no time:

## Read a Chapter from a Book

Yes, just a chapter. You can turn your grandkids' visit into a very special event by creating a mini-cliffhanger at the end of each get-together. It's family-time-meets-book-club, and it's an ideal bonding experience. Reading aloud to your grandkids is an excellent way to engage their imaginations and their interest.

Books you might try include *The Year of Billy Miller*, or any of Lemony Snicket's 13 children's books in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, or *Matilda*. All are great choices. Spend some time in the children's section of your local library. Librarians will know what the "must-read" books are for children of the same age.

And if your grandkids simply can't stand to leave the story unfinished, consider calling them once a week, or even every night before bed, to read another chapter over the phone. Better yet, do a little face time via Skype!

## Hold a Treasure Hunt

Doesn't everyone love a treasure hunt? They're fun, puzzling and active for everyone involved. And the great thing is, there are so many ways to customize the experience to suit your lifestyle and location. Write tips or clues on sticky notes. Then place the notes in different spots around your home. Hide them in rooms or social areas, or even nearby parks. Make sure the clues are challenging by including riddles or rhymes. Each clue should lead to the next, with the ultimate goal of finding the *treasure*. That treasure can be something store-bought, such as a toy, or something you've made, like a plate of your homemade chocolate chip cookies.

Another fun way to build a treasure hunt is to create a list of items that your grandkids can come across while they're walking with you, through your building or neighborhood. Kids cross things off their list as they find them. A few ideas to get started might be a black dog, mailbox, red car, squirrel or bus.

Your treasure hunt is limited only by your imagination. Get creative!

And don't overlook your smartphone. It can be a great tool when it comes to treasure hunts. You can get your grandkids to take photos of items on their list, as an added element to the game. Or try a round of "alphabet soup." Get the kids to take a photo of something starting with each letter of the alphabet.

## Create a Movie Experience

Rather than plopping the kids in front of the television and let cable TV do the babysitting, create a movie experience. Discuss what films they'd like to see, and create a list, adding some of your favorites as well. Set aside a specific time during each visit to watch a film and be sure to have favorite snacks for munching. Homemade popcorn in small cardboard boxes or brown paper bags will provide a great movie cinema feel. Not sure which movies to start with? When in doubt I always suggest turning to Rob Reiner's classic fairy tale *The Princess Bride*. Or revisit Haley Mills as troublesome twins in *The Parent Trap*.

## Play Card Games

Children of the internet age have significant technological advancements, but they also miss out on some of the things we all enjoyed growing up, like card games. The only things you need are a deck of cards and a playing surface. Older kids will enjoy playing poker, blackjack, or even gin rummy. Younger ones will find great enjoyment in go fish, old maid and slapjack.

## Try Chef for a Day

Hit the pantry, fridge and cupboards and pull out a few ingredients. Next, try to come up with a dish without using a cookbook. Of course, you'll likely be working from your favorite memorized recipes, but by encouraging input from your helpers, they'll get a kick out of creating something new with you. And who knows, you might just create a new family classic.

When it comes to spending time with your grandkids, it's not about money, it's about time. Ideas of what you can do together are limitless, if you remember the two keys to successful visits:

- Keep the activity focused on your grandchild.
- Make it fun.

It's not about completing the task perfectly, it's about having a good time in the process.

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*A year from now, you'll wish you'd started today.*