

# Fun Family Traditions and Rituals

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## Why have Traditions?

Life is meant to be celebrated! How many times do we find ourselves saying, “Tomorrow I will take the kids to the park,” or “Next week, I will start reading to my children each night...” “Next month we will start having ‘family game night’ once a week...” “Next year when things ‘settle-down,’ we’ll go on that much-needed family vacation...” Well, most likely things are never going to ‘settle-down’ and if we keep procrastinating, we may just run out of tomorrows, next weeks, next months and next years!

Too often we get so caught up in the mundane drudgery of day to day responsibilities that we forget to have fun! We race from one event to another like a car zooming around a race track without ever so much as a glance at the beauty off to the side. Well, it is time to slam on the brakes, look around, gather our family around us and take a deep breath! It’s time to celebrate the journey! Traditions and rituals allow us to do just that! They allow us to celebrate those things that are most important to our family. Traditions involve meaningful activities that are repeated throughout the months and years. Often these activities revolve around a particular holiday or season, or around special events such as baptisms or graduations. However, traditions don’t need to revolve around a holiday; they can be as simple as family gatherings for dinner every Sunday evening or having a snowball fight on the first snow of the season each year. By allowing traditions and rituals to become part of your home, you’ll find that memories are created, family unity is increased, and the display of affection and friendship between siblings and spouses is enhanced.

Think about your favorite childhood memories. Often these memories revolve around a particular tradition or ritual. Our family had the Christmas tradition of picking out a tree from our yard, cutting it down, and then decorating it as a family. I can still remember each year walking around our yard as we all debated on which tree would make the perfect Christmas tree. We all had our own opinions, but would finally manage to agree on one. Then my dad would chop it down and the entire family would decorate it with a hodgepodge of decorations that we had accumulated throughout the years. It certainly wasn’t the fanciest tree in the neighborhood, but it was ours and it had a charm that was all its own!

Family reunions are wonderful traditions. We always looked forward to our annual family reunion every summer. Families would gather from all over to re-unite with their relatives at this big event every summer. Some stayed in houses, others in tents, and others in the various houses of our relatives who owned the land. There was horse-back riding, tether-ball, games, and an annual talent show. One of our favorite activities was called “sliding rock.” It was a natural water-fall that dropped into a pool of water below. The constant water had smoothed the surface of the rocks so smooth that it made the perfect slide for children to slide down the water-fall into the pool. This was a time for our family to have fun re-connecting with family that we didn’t see very often.

Another favorite childhood memory of mine was our weekly “family night.” Every Sunday evening my mom and dad and brothers and sister would gather as a family for a lesson and then play games together. I believe this tradition blessed our family in ways we cannot begin to conceive! Now that I am married with six children of my own, you can bet that our family has “family night” every week – which brings me to another advantage of traditions and rituals. As traditions are passed down from one generation to the next, children can learn about their ancestors and gain a connection with their past. They gain pride in their family and heritage and become more aware of who they are, what they can become, and what is expected of them. They learn that they are a part of something bigger than themselves.

Children love traditions as it gives them feelings of security and also provides something for them to look forward to. Many times the anticipation of an expected event is just as fun as the event itself! Several years ago my husband started a tradition called “Father’s Day Flee” (you can read about it under “Father’s Day Traditions”). A friend of ours joked to my husband that he was the only person he knew who actually named their vacations! Well, not only does this vacation have a name, but it also has a theme! Each year my husband comes up for a different theme for the trip. Now even months in advance we can often hear our children asking, “Where are we going for “Father’s Day Flee” this year?” The anticipation is just as fun as the event!

## **Family Rituals**

Rituals are similar to traditions; however, they can be even more simple in nature and can occur at any given interval, even as often as several times a day. Like traditions, not only do rituals teach our children values that we hold dear, but they also provide a way to pass those values down from generation to generation. Rituals provide comfort and help family members feel connected to one another. A family ritual could be as simple as a group hug or family prayer. I had a teacher who had a little ritual every time his children left the house. He would call out, “Remember who you are and what you stand for!” If they heard “Remember...” they could easily finish the phrase, “I know, I know... remember who I am and what I stand for!” They may have rolled their eyes once or twice at the constant repetition, but I am sure that the message was brought to their heart and mind during times when they may have needed a little extra courage or encouragement.

Some may confuse rituals with ordinary routines. Routines are also important, especially for children, because it helps them to know what to expect and gives them a sense of peace and security. Rituals take routines one step further, however, by adding something a little more meaningful to the event. Think about the way you put your children to bed at night. Perhaps your family prays together, or snuggles in bed for a bed-time story, or sings the same good-night lullaby each night. These may seem like simple routines, but there are some subtle but important differences that elevate a simple routine into a true ritual. Rituals have a little extra pizzazz or special meaning that helps family members connect and feel loved. In this way a simple act has a deeper meaning or purpose that can become symbolic of one’s love and devotion.

Take brushing your teeth for instance. This is a classic everyday routine - not a ritual. Suppose however, that every night at 8:30 p.m. your family has a “tooth-brushing party.” Everyone rushes to the bathroom and brushes their teeth while at the same time humming, “If you’re happy and you know it, brush your teeth!” Certainly, this would help the simple routine of teeth-brushing to become a “family ritual!” Now, I realize this example may be impractical, but here is another example sent to me by Tracey, who says that this is a ritual that she and her husband share. She states:

“Whoever gets to the bathroom first to brush their teeth will put toothpaste on the other person’s toothbrush as well, so when the other person comes to brush their teeth, although so small an action, it lets you know that someone is thinking about you and loves you. It’s something special.”

This small act elevates the simple routine of brushing teeth into something more meaningful – a family ritual.

Sometimes rituals happen quite by accident. You do something one time (maybe off the cuff) and your children absolutely love it and ask for it again and again. Soon it becomes a ritual. Take bath-time for instance. One time I was drying off my son’s hair with a towel after his bath and I exclaimed, “What’s this? Is this a dinosaur egg? Oh no – it is hatching!” Then he pulled his head through the towel and gave a big “RRRR!” Ever since that time whenever I get him or his little sisters out of the tub they all shout, “do the dinosaur egg, do the dinosaur egg!” It became a silly little after-bath ritual!

Different families celebrate rituals in various ways. One evening my husband and I were with a group of friends and we asked them what their most important family rituals were. One couple said that they have a sit-down dinner together as a family every night. That is quite an accomplishment in this hurried age! Another couple said that their favorite ritual is simply “holding-hands” whenever they get the chance. That reminded me of one my favorite rituals – going on a date with my husband every Friday night. Rituals allow us to connect as husbands and wives, as parents and children, as extended family members, and as friends.

One daily ritual our family participates in is our “family cheer.” We all put our hands on top of one another and then shout, “1,2, 3...” and then we yell out our last name as we throw our hands into the air. The kids always yell “again, again!” Rituals such as these give our children a sense of belonging: This is MY family and I am an important member of it!

Rituals can help people remember who they are and what is expected of them, even when they may be far away from home. I was talking to a friend of ours who was away to college and she began sharing several

traditions and rituals that her family did together – everything from camping trips, to caroling through the neighborhood on Christmas Eve. It was obvious that she felt a strong connection with her family, and because rituals played a part in her life, memories of bonding are fondly recalled. Even though she may be far away from home, the sense of unity with her family is still alive in her heart. Retaining these kinds of memories of family can help children make wise choices, and affect their future lives in many positive ways.

Other benefits of rituals occur during times of stress or change. Children can suffer during times such as divorce or separation of a parent, a move to a new location or new school, loss of a loved one, birth of a new child, illness, or other similar events. The familiarity of routines and especially family rituals help a child feel stability and comfort. It may be difficult for a child to move and be in completely different surroundings than he or she is used to, but a family ritual such as a familiar lullaby or favorite story book that is read each night can help a child feel a sense of normalcy. Rituals can improve overall health and well-being, comfort us during times of stress, and allow us to connect as husbands and wives, as parents and children, as extended family members, and as friends.

Included in this book is a compilation of family traditions and rituals. Many of them are our own family traditions, and many others were sent in from people all over the world. We hope you enjoy reading these traditions. If you find one that you like, we encourage you to incorporate it into your own family, and let the memories begin!

## **Saturday Rituals**

**Saturday morning fun** -- We started doing what I might think is opposite of what happens on Saturdays. I have some children that wake up around 6:00 am each morning. On Saturday, other family members sleep in. I felt like we were waiting around for everyone to get going and wasting our morning. I decided to change our routine--actually with the help of my 5 year old.

One Friday my 5 year old asked if we could go to a park in the morning when we woke up (he actually asked his dad). So in everyone's mind we knew that we would all get up when the first child got up and get ready to go. We live in Las Vegas, so getting up to beat the heat is very important.

The next morning we went to the park and then to the Library. It has become tradition to get up early and do an activity--we have driven to go hiking, found various parks around where we live, etc. And then we go to the library to finish the morning. We usually get home about the time to make lunch and have naps. Then for the rest of the day we work to get the things done that need to be done on Saturday.

We look forward to the weekend and planning the things that we want to do for Saturday morning. And it is quite refreshing and rewarding to do stuff as a family (even if it is before our work on Saturday.)

Thanks for least letting me write this fun thing down for myself! And thank you for all the fun e-mails and ideas. We have enjoyed the gold ticket program and are grateful for fresh ideas to try!

Susan Harris

**Blanket Tents and Treats** -- Our little tradition comes around every Saturday evening. My twin grandchildren, 4 1/2 yrs. set up a "tent" in the front room made from blankets, sheets, pillows and anything that interests them. I make popcorn or cookies and the three of us lie down and watch a fun movie together. I look forward to this so much as I work full time. We get to catch up and gossip and just have a great time being together. And it's inexpensive!

EvaLynne  
Corona, CA

**Family Time** -- Every Saturday Morning we make breakfast together as a family; everyone is involved in some way. At least once a month we have movie night with the whole family. On Sunday we usually do an activity together. It might include a walk in the park, going for ice cream, going for a swim, riding our bikes... We attend church regularly. After church we always visit the Grandparent's homes.

Keith

**Saturday fun** -- Every Saturday morning is for us to share. We all get up early, get dressed quickly and then, leave immediately (it is all left behind, even the beds, as it is such a special day) As soon as we arrive (a nice short walk leads us to the place) we start the day with breakfast (a nice long yummy breakfast at a place we all love to go) and it is then that we decide what we will do next. Kids love going for walks, visiting a bookstore which is not precisely near, but it is quite fun to take the bus rather than the car for once and enjoy the trip; or going "to see toys"... there is a great deal of possibilities but the best thing about all this is that we decide as a whole and we spend all morning together sharing whatever activity and experience which may arise. The kids come back somewhat exhausted at lunch time, but quite happy though. They are always looking forward to Saturdays, and that's great, I think.

Blanca

## **Sunday Rituals**

**Family Interviews** -- I have five boys, and one family tradition that we all enjoy is our monthly father's interviews. Each Sunday morning or afternoon I do an interview with one boy. We do have a prayer, and a talk, but we also do fun (age-specific) activities together.

One of their favorite activities is squish-baby for the young ones, which is basically rolling around and wrestling on the floor. When they are a bit older, they choose simple games like Memory, Othello, or Battleship. Sometimes we jump on the trampoline together as we talk, or visit during a drive or a walk or a hike.

The simple focused time together is wonderful. I ask them about life, and goals, and what they want most to do in life. I try to be very patient and listen. When I'm really brave, I ask them what I can do to be a better Dad! Boy, that really opens them up.

Another tradition is our morning 10 second hugs, and our evening 10 second hugs. Twenty seconds of my day for each child is a wonderful bonding time. They jump into my arms and we actually count to 10 as we hug. It's a great way to start the day, and again to end the day.

Christopher Westra

[www.lcreatereality.com](http://www.lcreatereality.com)

**Breakfast and Bible** -- I have three kids with my husband between 6 and 1. One of our traditions is on Sunday. We wake up early, cook breakfast with the big kids, then fix and put the table in order with a candle, a bible and beautiful flowers. We read a history in the book and ask the kids how much they understood and explain the history. Finally each one of us prays for God anything that is important for us and my husband gives the blessing for the kids.

Paula

**Dinner and Board Games** -- Our family Tradition is Sunday Family Night - Each Sunday a different family member chooses what we have for dinner and we have it around 5:30 p.m. and then we pick a board game and we play it. Our board game collection is now getting larger but we started out with a pack of cards. The kids love our tradition as they get to just have fun with choices that are theirs. The games usually run for about 2 hours and the kids are never bored!! (LOL)

We also have a yearly vacation - we go camping, fishing and just live one week without any thing electronic. It is great for the communication within our family.

Tracey  
Brisbane, Australia

**Church on Sunday** -- Many of you probably have this same tradition, but our children know that every Sunday we will go to church. Even our youngest children get up on Sunday morning and get dressed in their church clothes without being reminded. I think that children need to have things in their life that they can count on and going to church should be one of these things!

Wendy Jensen  
<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

**Family Home Evening** -- Our family has the tradition of holding "Family Home Evening" (FHE) once a week. Every Sunday evening we meet together as a family and everyone takes turns participating. We have a chart that lists various assignments for family night such as: prayer, song, scripture, lesson, activity, and treat. The youngest children get to be the "helpers." Every week we rotate the chart so that everyone gets a turn to participate in a different way. Whoever has their name on "treat" gets to choose the treat we will have for our family night. Whoever has their name on "activity" gets to choose the fun family activity that we will do the next night (Monday). These activities could be anything from playing tag outside to going to the library, or simply playing a rousing game of charades or board games. Everyone knows that they can't schedule anything else on Monday nights because that is Family Night!

If you would like more information about family night, including a list of activities and a family home evening chart, please refer to our “Positive Parenting” book available at:

<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

**Chinese Poems** -- I have an 11 years old daughter and expecting another baby coming soon. When I think about our family traditions, the memory goes back to my childhood. I have a brother. He is 4 years younger than I. Our favorite day in the week was Sunday – actually Sunday morning. Since I was 4 years old, every Sunday morning, I had been allowed to go to my parents' bed snuggle with them for a while. That's the time my dad told me stories and recited Chinese poems. Then I had my brother, he joined in our Sunday morning special time. My mom went to the kitchen to fix some nice breakfast when my little brother was settled down. When my brother was two years old, we moved to outside taking walks while my dad told stories and poems. It didn't take very long for me to join my dad reciting the poems. Soon my brother did also. The tradition lasted till my brother went to college when he was 17 years old. I spend my college time in my parents' university. Then my husband join in our morning team. Now we are far away from my parents in America. Sometimes I call and let them hear my daughter recite the Chinese poems with me over phone.

**Family Togetherness** -- When I was a kid I really adore my parents the way they handled our family. I am from Philippines. We value our family time. During the weekend we have family time, go to church during Sunday. We have fun, we play together with our parents. My father has time to listen to us, we get together with our grandparents and aunties and uncles. During Christmas we always have to celebrate it with our relatives. For us it is very special because it my grandmother's birthday... All relatives have to come.  
Amor

My family tradition is we meet up with my husband's father every Sunday at the mall so my daughter can get to know her grandpa. We go for some lunch and shopping and she really enjoys it. My daughter and I also go swimming once a week so we get some quality time together.  
Sarah Chamings

## Marriage Rituals and Traditions

**Question and Answer Game** -- My wife Nancy and I have a tradition that helps to keep our marriage strong. It's a question and answer game we play that's fun and has the effect of building rapport and intimacy between us. The rules of the game are:

\*Look for the qualities you most admire in your mate.

\*Choose positive questions to ask each other.

\*In answering a question, highlight what you admire or appreciate about your partner.

To play the game, we carve out some time to be alone together when we can snuggle. Then I'll ask Nancy questions like: "What are you happy about?" "What are you excited about?" "What are you committed to?"

Her responses might be something like: "I'm happy that you did such a terrific job writing that article. I'm happy to be married to such a creative person. I'm happy that summer is over and fall is here." "I'm excited we'll be spending quality time together on our vacation next week. I'm excited that we'll have fun. I'm excited that we'll see our friends." "I'm committed to being the best spouse, partner, lover and friend to you that I can be. I'm committed to being successful. I'm committed to having a balanced life."

When it's my turn to answer the same questions, I compose similar answers based on those qualities I sincerely admire and respect in my wife. And in the years we've played this game, it has kept us focused on what we love about each other. It continues to be a very bonding experience for both of us.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lee Hefner and his wife, Nancy Wasson, Ph.D., are co-authors of *Keep Your Marriage: What to Do When Your Spouse Says "I don't love you anymore!"* available at [www.KeepYourMarriage.com](http://www.KeepYourMarriage.com)

To sign up for their free weekly *Keep Your Marriage Internet Magazine*, go to [www.KeepYourMarriage.com/Magazine.htm](http://www.KeepYourMarriage.com/Magazine.htm)

In addition, they offer Overcome Control Conflict with Your Spouse or Partner: What to Do if Your Mate Says You're Too Controlling or If You're Tired of Being Controlled at [www.ControllingSpouse.com](http://www.ControllingSpouse.com)

**Weekly Date Night** -- My husband and I have been married twelve years and have six children. We have a tradition of going on a date once a week. This is a time for us to get some "together" time away from the kids where we can re-connect! We believe that going on a date once a week is one of the best things a couple can do for their marriage! If you need ideas on what to do for dates, try Michael Webb's book "300 Creative Dates" available at:

[300 Creative Dates](http://www.300CreativeDates.com)

We also have a tradition of going on an overnight outing (just the two of us) a couple of times a year. Once a year we go to the Anniversary Inn and stay in one of their beautiful theme rooms. It is very romantic! For more information, go to: <http://www.the-travel-bug.com> We go on at least two extended vacations once a year. One is just for the two of us (the kids stay with grandma!) and the other one is for the entire family!

Rick and Wendy Jensen  
<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

**Questions For Couples** -- In order for my husband and I to grow closer together, we ordered the book "[1000 Questions For Couples](#)" by Michael Webb. Each day my husband and I pick a question from the book to ask each other. I have found that I like to have time to think about a question before answering it and so we each e-mail a question to each other (while he is at work and I am at home). This gives us a chance to really think about the question and formulate a clear response. It helps us to get to know each other better and grow closer together. It has also sparked some wonderful intimate discussions!

Jen

**E-mailing Questions** -- After reading the above tradition, I thought it was such a good idea that I looked up the web-site and read a similar experience:

"My husband and I have been emailing 3-4 of the questions and our answers each day for the last month and it has had the most wonderful effect on our relationship. I felt that we had just been 'coasting' for a while but now we are more in love than we have been in our 17 years together. And the resulting passion has been amazing."

Barbara Koen

For more information go to: [1000 Questions For Couples](#)

**Love Letters** -- One tradition I have to help keep our marriage strong, is to write "love letters" to my husband several times a year. It benefits me just as much as it does him because as I write, I think of all the wonderful qualities that he has and how much I love him! I absolutely love to receive love letters as well! (All you husbands out there – remember to send your wife love letters every so often – we wives absolutely LOVE them! If you are somewhat "romantically-challenged" and don't know how to write a letter then check out this site for some ideas!)

[Love Letters and Poems](#)

**Marriage Resources** -- "The most important thing a man can do for his children is to love their mother!" There are many wonderful resources available to help you keep your marriage strong and one of the best ways you can do this is through celebrating traditions and rituals together. For more information on marriage, go to:

[www.savemymarriagetoday.com](http://www.savemymarriagetoday.com)

[www.KeepYourMarriage.com](http://www.KeepYourMarriage.com)

## Reading Rituals

You may have tangible wealth untold;  
Caskets of jewels and coffer of gold.  
Richer than I you can never be--

I had a mother who read to me.  
--Strickland Gillilian

**Personal Bedtime Stories** -- One of my fun family "traditions" occurs regularly at bedtime story time. My daughters, Cheyenne and Savannah, like all children, love to have me read to them. But they enjoy even more hearing made-up stories about two little girl bunnies we've invented named "Seyenne" and "Chavannah". Seyenne and Chavannah, what a surprise, are 6 and 4 yrs old and go to the same classes in school and have the same activities as my girls....they have friends named "E-claire" and "Gadlys" that do things just like their friends Claire and Gladys do, and their teachers have mixed up names that sound just like THEIR teachers' names...and when I had a miscarriage last year, lo and behold, Seyenne and Chavannah's mommy had a miscarriage too. When we go somewhere or do something exciting, or one of the girls does something that they shouldn't have and gets in trouble for it, or something happens to one of the children at the school or they hear about something in the news, the situation resurfaces in a Seyenne and Chavannah story. It's a wonderful manner to transmit ideas of tradition and family values, discuss emotions, and work through sticky subjects that are not always so easy to bring up directly...

Another tradition we made up was to create a lullaby using all our family member's names, including the cat Cajou, back when the girls were little. I'd have to sit down at the keyboard and tap out the music to give you an idea of what it sounds like, but it goes like this :

Cheyenne, Savannah, mommy, daddy, baby and Cajou,  
Grandmas, Grandpas, Mamie Jos, Mamie Zouzou,  
Cheyenne, Savannah, mommy, daddy and Cajou,  
Tatas, tontons, Riley, Cade, Alanna, Ian too.

It's a bit Franglais (Mamie means Gramma in French, and tata and tonton mean auntie and uncle) but everyone gets accounted for and they find a certain security, I believe, in hearing everyone's names together in a repetitive, lullaby song. Mamie Zouzou and Cajou and "baby" are no longer with us, but they are remembered in this song, and still considered a part of the family...And it helps us to feel closer to my sister and brother and their kids, who all live back home in the States.

We're going to have to modify the rhythm in a couple of months when our third daughter arrives and we insert her name into the first and third lines, but I'm sure we'll find a way!

Heather Riviere  
Noisy le Grand, France

**Fairy Tales** -- One of my traditions is to stay at home with my husband and three kids. We enjoy books for every age such as fairy tales with our own style. We meet each other on the father's bed with many blankets and begin to read the favorite book of each one with a slow and light voice.

Paula  
Columbia

**Reading Long Books** -- Our favorite tradition is reading long books, first in the evening for years, and now in the morning. We have read almost 100 excellent children's and young adult books, fantasy, history, adventure, and our boys love it and beg for more. It's a great time to bond and cuddle also - they love to be on either side of DAD.

Christopher Westra – Gunnison, Utah (Chris is the author of the best-selling book "I Create Reality" available at: [www.lcreatereality.com](http://www.lcreatereality.com))

**Folk Legends** -- We like to all get together - NOT at bedtime and read folk legends and stories from around the world, we talk about them and compare with other stories that are similar and perhaps one of the children might do a picture.

Louise Robbins

**Library Time** -- One of the greatest things my mother instilled in me as a child was a love of reading. I well remember going to the library each week and coming home with bags overflowing with books. I remember my mom reading stories to us as children and I remember checking out loads of books that I loved to read myself. I was quite a book-worm

growing up and I am delighted that my ten year old daughter has the same love for reading that I did.

Reading is an excellent time not only for cuddling and bonding, but also for teaching the great values of life. My mom took great care in choosing books that carried wonderful messages of honesty, service, obedience and other values. This was a perfect time for numerous discussions about all sorts of topics.

Even if your children are old enough to read themselves, they still love hearing a great book from the mouth of their mother or father. Listening to you read is one of the best ways to get your children excited about reading. We have a tradition in our home where either mom or dad reads a long book (chapter book) to the kids each night. We usually read two or three chapters a night until we finish the book and then we start a new one.

If you would like a book with stories that teach values but don't have time to search through titles at your library, then here is an excellent e-book that contains Inspirational Stories for Children:

[Inspirational Stories For Children](#)

Wendy Jensen

**Teaching Baby to Read** -- Another reading tradition involves not only reading to your baby, but actually teaching your baby to read. Find out more about this fascinating subject at the following web-site:

[Babies Can Read!](#)

**Story-telling By Candlelight** -- One tradition we have is story-telling. My children love to hear stories, either true stories from our childhood, or made up stories. My husband is a master story-teller and can have all of the children completely spellbound with his amazing stories in seconds! He loves to tease the kids by building up the suspense and right when he gets to the best part he will say, "To be continued...." Then the kids yell,

“No – you can’t do that! You have to finish the story!” Sometimes to make story-time extra special, my husband will light candles around the room and turn off all of the lights. We are in the process of putting together a web-site of Audio Story books so that you can download some of these stories (as well as traditional children’s stories) for your own children! The web-site is: [www.audiostorytime.com](http://www.audiostorytime.com)

## Meal-Time Rituals

**Story Of Us** --- I don't have children of my own, but every other week we have my husband’s children in our home. Some of the traditions I have implemented with them are: Dinner time: TV off and we say our Highs and Lows of the day. Just like in the movie "Story of Us." We all go around at least once and whoever needs to share an extra one, he or she is welcome. Sometimes to do something different, we play a word game or get a "question book" and make competitions.

Wileyska Sandoval  
Miami, Florida

**Dinner Time Sharing** -- At the dinner table we try to always take turns in sharing what was good and what was not good about each family member's day. I know this is not a new idea, but it is a good way for everyone to get any exciting news or problems out in the open.

Stella

**Special Plate** -- I just remembered a simple family tradition that my Aunt Sue started and that I thought was kind of neat and have borrowed for my own family. She has a plate that has "You are special" written on it in bold letters all around the rim and takes it out whenever someone in her family has a reason to celebrate an accomplishment, a birthday or some important event in their lives. She makes a big deal about the family member getting an A on their report card, or getting a personal best in sports, passing an interview, or whatever, and invites that person to talk about whatever the particular event is during the meal. It's a simple way to honor someone and makes that person feel really good about

themselves.

When their 6 children were all still at home, my Aunt Sue and Uncle Ned often had all 6 of them at their supper table along with various neighbors' children, members from their church, as well as the single renters living with them in their house, and they really knew how to make everyone feel welcome and even essential to these extended family dinners...

I didn't buy my 'You are special plate', but rather created one in my Tuesday night pottery class. It's not perfect, but my children get all excited about getting to eat off of it when it is their turn to celebrate.

Heather

**Teaching Table Manners** -- We incorporate the G.O.L.D. Standard ticket system periodically into our meal-times in order to teach table manners. It works like this...we pass out two tickets to each family member. Then, while we eat, we all watch each other to make sure we all use good manners. If someone catches someone else using bad manners, then he or she can take a ticket from that person. We can catch our children (or they can catch us) if bad manners are exhibited. For example, chewing with one's mouth open, talking with a mouth full of food, putting elbows on the table, using one's shirt or arm for a napkin, leaving the table without asking to be excused, and so on! It is a lot of fun and our kids are even able to "catch" mom and dad a few times, and they always get a big kick out of that! Our children beg us to do it more often but we reserve it only for certain nights.

Wendy Jensen

For more information on the G.O.L.D. Standard Ticket System, refer to our web-site: <http://www.firstratefamily.com>

**"What's New Today?"** -- Our family has a "What's New Today" tradition. I make a point to enjoy our family meal together without the distraction of TV. During the meal my children must share with us all something new that they learned that day. I always check with them when they come home from school and if they can't think of anything new I get them to research something from their books or encarta before they start their

homework. It works a treat and starts them learning early about public speaking.

Maria Gregory

## Bed-Time Rituals

**Good Night Stinky Feet!** -- This is a little ritual I do with my children before they go to sleep at night. I gently run my fingers through their hair as I say, "Good night hair!" Then I trace their eyebrows and cheeks and nose as I say "good night" to each part of their face. If I forget to say "good night" as I do it then my two and three year old will remind me by exclaiming, "say it, say it!" They always try and prolong the game by saying "you forgot my ears" or "you forgot my ankles!" When I get to their feet I say, "Good night stinky feet!" and of course they giggle with delight. The kids beg me to play it with them every night. It gives me the chance to connect with each child one at a time and lets them know how much I love them!

Wendy Jensen

<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

**Good Night Baby** – We had different rituals for each of our children when they were babies. For example, one child I would always nurse in the same chair and sing him the same lullaby before sending him off to bed. My baby daughter enjoyed listening to soft music on a CD player. Another child always liked a certain bed-time story. For bed-time rituals to help your baby sleep through the night, go to:

[Baby Sleep Success](#)

**Bath Time Bonding** -- One tradition in our family since I was a child still goes on. Me and my 2 sisters always sat with my mom in the bathroom while she had her bath. That was our special moments with our mother and each other. Now that I have my own 3 daughters, they always come and sit by me when I'm in the bath and then we share with each other whatever the need is to share. Even my little boy wants to join us, but unfortunately it is a girl's thing. In our busy lives that's basically the only

time that we can share our deepest feelings with each other. With a hot cup of coffee of course!

Alta de Klerk  
Bultfontein  
Free State  
South Africa

**India Festivals** -- We have many festivals in India. I make it a point to get the children involved in the festival by getting them to take the lead doing decorations etc. During Diwali we light diyas in the house and decorate the house. I don't buy anything ready-made, but encourage them to make diyas and garland perform pooja They always enjoy and look forward for any occasion where they can decorate anything. I also enjoy lots when I see them getting satisfied in what they do.

Priti

India

**Family Society** -- I am a black South African and I've got a large family and we all live apart, so to keep the spirit of the family we've got what we call family society and we meet once in a month and donate money to the family account for just in case one of the family members has something like a wedding, funeral or even a party, that money can help them.

Besides having to donate the money, the family society keeps us together and we are able to know each other from generation to generation. I hope you will find our tradition quite interesting.

Verdi

**A Heavenly Experience** -- This winter I went with our children (in the weekend) at a monastery and stayed Friday night, Saturday and Sunday...it was a heavenly time! We decided then to repeat the experience whenever possible; thank God there are places and human beings that pray for all humanity every single day!

Mariana

## Arts and Crafts for Children

**Toddler Play Ideas** -- I have several fun activities that I do with my toddler and pre-schooler. I actually found these ideas in a couple of books which I will pass along to you. These activities are really fun and also encourage physical and mental development as well as social skills, emotional skills and creativity. They are great for parents and also for teachers. The books are available at:

[104 Toddler Play Ideas](#)

**Arts and Crafts** -- A fantastic tradition to do with your family can be centered around doing fun arts and craft projects together. My kids absolutely love to do this and it keeps them busy and entertained for hours! Since I am not very creative in coming up with ideas on my own, I looked into a couple of books that have lots of great ideas. One book I particularly liked is called: "Little Kid Crafts For All Seasons" and includes the bonus book: "Little Kid Paper Plate Crafts." The pages have colorful pictures of each craft and clear simple instructions so that even someone like me (who is somewhat "craft-impaired" can follow them! Here is the book:

[Little Kid Crafts For All Seasons](#)

Another book you might enjoy is called "365 Easy Kid Crafts and Art Activities They'll Love." This book includes fun, creative, economical, and educational kid crafts. For more information, go to:

[365 Easy Kid Crafts](#)

**Flubber, Play-Dough and Face-Painting** -- Here are some activities that we enjoy doing with our kids ages 2-11. One is making "Flubber." It is so easy to make and making it is just as fun as playing with it! Our kids have a blast with this; they put a straw in it and blow huge bubbles, or press different shapes into it using molds or cookie cutters. It is great for a science project and also makes for a very fun family. We put it in plastic bags and it lasts for weeks! For the recipe, click here:

### [Recipes For Flubber](#)

This web-site also contains the recipe for home-made play-dough. This another family tradition our family does. The kids love to be able to help make it and choose their own colors. Play-dough keeps them entertained for a long time! Home-made play-dough is more fun than play-dough you buy at the store since it is softer and more workable and lasts longer.

Another fun activity to do with your kids is face-painting. Face Painting is fun for Birthday Parties, Halloween, Carnivals, School Events, or just for a fun activity to do with your kids!

For information on face-painting, check out this site:

[Face Painting For Kids!](#)

Wendy Jensen

<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

## Outdoor Traditions

**Enjoying Nature** -- At the moment the best thing that we do is to go for a walk, and collect seeds or leaves etc, that remind us of the seasons we are in at the time. And to discuss what that seasons feels like to us. Then to make a nature table with our findings, that is placed in a noticeable place in the house. It helps my son and I to enjoy the natural resources around us, to learn together, and to make things together. Everyone in the family can be involved.

Soluna

**Swinging at the Park** -- We go to parks together and take our daughter on the swings. Daddy also swings her in his arms. When she wants a swing she says “yang yang” then puts legs over her Daddy’s arms and gives us both kisses before he swings her.

Shirley Parsons

Brampton Ontario Canada

**Growing A Garden** -- We have four children and each child has their own personal growing space in the garden. Every year, on their birthday, we take them to the garden center where they choose a new addition to their patch.

Every month either me or Ian take one of our children out on a "date." We alternate which child it is each month. It gives each child a chance to have some quality one to one time.

**Mini Phenologists** -- We visit an area of countryside once a month (hopefully!) and track the changes in the scene: plants, colours, activity, insects. We try to take a photo at each visit and try to be mini phenologists!

We like to go beach combing, finding pretty pebbles, strange objects, glass and if we are lucky fossils. We do this on a weekly basis as we love to go to the beach walking the dogs, and because we are very lucky to live near it!

We have special days out: one parent to one child and have a quality day out somewhere, where we are able to give 100% attention to that child & that parent! We have done this since they were toddlers. We probably do it 3 times a year, more if we are lucky. It could be anything from a walk & picnic to a visit to somewhere more costly - depending on finances at the time!

Louise Robbins

**Obstacle Course** -- My name is Eva Speer and I am from Kingston, Ontario, Canada. One of our fun family traditions is: in our back yard we like to set up a fun obstacle course race, easy enough for the kids but big enough that my husband and I can participate in.

We set up a limbo bar to start then, we put a ball between our knees and go around the pylons/or whatever you have, keep the ball for the

whole time during course (doesn't have to stay between your knees), then we have hula hoops where we do a set number of turns with the hoop.

Then they run over to 2 small fish tanks/bowls filled with white packing thingy's and try to fish out a small ring box, inside is a safety pin then they run over to the washing lines where there are 6 or more balloons filled with water, inside 1 is a key, they have to pop all the balloons then find the key. Then they run over to where there are 2 umbrella strollers locked up with bike locks, they use the key to open the bike lock, put the ball in the stroller and buckle up.

Then they go around pylons, trees etc. . ., to the kiddy pool where they pick up a toy fishing rod with a magnetic end and they have to fish out 3 or more of their colour fish. When they have all of them they put the fish into the stroller with the ball and race to the finish line.

We do this at least once a week and we change things around to keep it exciting and fun. The whole family joins in even the grandparents and neighbors! It is a fun and exciting way to get exercise and promote team work.

Eva Speer & Family

**Swimming and Walking** -- A few new things I have been doing are swimming at the beach with my family, and going on walks. They seem to work well, and we all sleep a little better at night.

Sherie H. Everett, WA

**"Our Special Tree"** -- My family and I have many traditions. Some are ones carried on from my family, some are new ones. But I think my most favorite started by accident! My boys and I love nature (well I love nature and I dragged them along with me to explore it and discover it for themselves-- they too love it now).

The first year after my divorce I was trying to find something to help raise the spirits of my 3 sons, aged 2, 3 and 5. We discovered this tree that my

young boys, could all climb and I took pictures of them. The next year we were once again walking through the same park and the boys recognized the tree... they all ran to it and climbed it once again, with me taking pictures. The following year we sought out the tree. The boys by this time were calling it "Our Special Tree."

Over the last 10 years I have taken many pictures of my boys in, and around this tree, through all seasons. We have watched as the boys and tree grew together. After 10 years the tree has become more and more difficult to climb, but it hasn't stilled our desire to visit! We look forward to each visit.

This has opened many conversations about similarities between us and the tree... how the tree anchors its roots deep into the ground--we anchor ourselves to Christ. Though difficult times may come our way, it only makes us dig deeper into the firmness of Christ the same way harsh winds cause the tree to dig deeper into the ground. Even though we may feel we haven't grown, God continues working, nurturing, and helping us grow everyday. Sometimes we just need to step back and look once again at the "pictures" of where we were... to realize where God has brought us and how He has changed us! We live in beautiful Prince Edward Island, Canada. If you are ever in our area -- Come and visit "Our Tree"

Denice

**Ramadan** -- It is my pleasure to share with you an activity that my family does during the fasting month (Ramadan) annually. They cook a lot of yellow rice with beef or koskos. Most are fasting and can't eat until sunset. As sunset approaches, all the neighbors are invited to share the breakfast together in a vast area among the houses, outside our homes. After the eating then praying, then some of the old aged males will have different activities such as folklor, "Dabkah" and others to sing about the

past and/or chanting. All the kids of the area are collected and clapping their hands and chant over next to them.

Dr. Abed Al Askari

Gaza, Palestine

**Jewish Festival Of Succot** -- At the moment we are celebrating the Jewish festival of Succot. During this holiday, we eat, sleep and play in a little hut we built in our garden. It is a festival mentioned in the bible (the Old Testament). My husband builds a hut out of ready made metal poles and we cover the poles with white canvas. On top we cover it with a wooden rug, as required. We have to be able to see the stars through the top. My children spend hours at school, kindergarten and at home preparing decorations for our Succa.

Israel

## Teaching and Disciplining Children

**Managing Children** -- In my family where we have 3 kids, it's not always easy to manage them, especially when they are throwing tantrums or quarreling among each other. Kids do quarrel on every little thing that some you might never imagine of!

To overcome this, one particular method that I like is to split them up. If you're thinking you need to put all your kids together to strengthen their relationship, then you are wrong. Sometimes, they need to be alone. Give them some space.

My kids all sleep in different rooms, so that make my tasks easier whenever they quarrel with each other. At least, the quarrel won't last all night until the next day once they go to bed. My kids tend to forget about the quarrel the night before after they've woke up the next day.

But when they are quarrelling, I try my best to keep an eye on them, their speech and actions. If things goes out of hand (eg: loud yelling or fighting), then I'll have to step in. Normally, I would separate them, and

talk to each of them personally. Give them a chance to complain, but never make any judgments until you've listened to both parties, and make your own judgments on who is right and wrong.

Jamie Sullivan (This idea is from my book "Child Anger Revealed – Your Ultimate Guide to Deal With Them Effectively" available at: [Manage Your Child](#))

**Parent's Bag Of Behavior Tricks:** A tradition our family has is writing up a "Family Mission Statement." This helps our family become united and focused on exactly what kind of family we want to be! For more ideas on strategies that you can use in your own family, check out Norma Schmidt's site at [www.behaviormagic.com](http://www.behaviormagic.com)

Norma is a parent, writer, and parenting workshop leader with a master's degree in Special Education. Click here for more information:

[The Parent's Bag of Behavior Tricks](#)

**Parenting Teenagers** -- For parents who are struggling with teenagers, here is a resource called, "My Out-Of-Control Teen" that includes an Audio/Video eBook plus Online Parent-Coaching For Parents With Out of Control Teens. It is available here:

[My Out-Of-Control Teen](#)

**Teaching Children Life Skills** -- A wonderful tradition we can have with our children is teaching them important skills they can use their entire lives! The author of this book goes around to various schools teaching the kids life-skills. Her book will show you "how to eliminate the Number One Battle between you and your child -- WORK!" For more information, go to: [Parenting Secrets From Mother Of Five](#)

**Better Behavior Wheel** -- My name is Julie Butler, and I'm a mother of four. I absolutely adore my kids, but believe me there were times when they were growing up when I wanted to strangle them.

Instead, when our two youngest were driving us crazy with their constant fighting and bickering we invented the Better Behavior Wheel.

To our delight, the Wheel put a stop to the fights overnight. So we expanded it to cover other behavioral problems, and were amazed at how effective our invention was.

Since offering the Wheel online just over two years ago, our product has helped more than 10,000 grateful parents just like yourself. If you would like information, go to:

[Better Behavior Wheel Parenting Tool](#)

## Sign Language Traditions

**Baby Sign Language** -- We have the tradition of teaching all of our children sign language when they are babies. Children can learn how to sign even before they can speak and so it helps them to be able to communicate with us much earlier than they would be able to otherwise. Another benefit with children who learn sign language is that temper tantrums are greatly reduced since children can communicate their needs and wants, thus reducing a lot of frustration! Sign Language is also a lot of fun for the whole family! For free articles on how to teach your child sign language, to: <http://www.signing4babies.com/articles>

Wendy Jensen

Wendy is the author of "Sign Language for Babies and Beyond: How to promote early communication and language development in your child" available at <http://www.signing4babies.com>

**Signing Time** -- Our family loves to sign together and so I decided to check out the "Signing Time" DVD's and Videos to see if it might be something my family would be interested in. I started with the first one and our children loved it so much that I purchased the entire set! All of

our kids have loved these DVD's and watch them over and over.

This is a great way to teach your children (and even you parents out there!) sign language -- especially if you are busy and can't seem to find the time to teach signs to your children yourself.

The DVD's show lots of children and babies signing and the music is very catchy and fun! My kids love to listen to the music CD's in the car and they sing along and do the signs that they have learned from watching the DVD's. I have been very impressed with this product and give it a "thumb's up!" I have also purchased extras to give as gifts for baby showers and birthdays. If you are interested in purchasing "Signing Time" DVD's or Videos, then you may do so at the following links:

[Signing For Babies Shop](#)  
["Signing Time" web-site](#)

**Signing Milk** -- I love your site: (<http://www.signing4babies.com>) I am teaching my baby to sign, and started about two months ago, she is now going to be 8 months in a few days. She is recognizing and responding to some signs now and has signed milk back. I teach her about 25 signs and most of them many times a day. Your site helps -- Thank you!

Renee

**Shaving Cream and Sign Language** -- One thing I have been doing with my primary students that I have carried over to my two sons under 3 years old is we take shaving cream (especially when I need to clean my kitchen floor or tables) and write letters, draw pictures, and then sign them (kinda like you would do with finger paint). I guide them to work on signs we're learning or interested in, such as "dog" for my 15 month old who constantly wants to sign dog (we have 4 of them, I wonder why, lol). My 2 year old, I believe due to sign language and partly my primary teaching background, knows how to write every letter, knows the sounds each letter makes, and can sign every letter including finger spelling his name and some basic sight words. I understand, it is imperative, such things as letters and spoken word be made into concrete objects (always at hand) instead of abstract ideas, I believe it is sign language that has

given my kids the opportunity to explore their world in depth from all realms.

Joanna McKenzie

**Signing Baby** -- My husband and I are grandparents but we have thoroughly enjoyed all of the emails and tips on signing and childcare tips. Our grandson is eleven months old and has been signing milk for three months. It is exciting each time he responds to and uses signs!

Robert & Marilyn Fluitt (Texas)

**Signing Reduces Tantrums** -- I'm a stay at home mum of 4 children, my eldest is my son Michael who just turned 17, then there is my 14 year old daughter Rhiannon, my 11 year old daughter Teressa and my 11 month old daughter Hayley. I didn't know anything about signing when my older children were little, although they did learn to sign through the school. Here in Rockhampton they have a signing choir and they compete in an eistedford at the theatre. I began simple signs with my youngest daughter when she was about 6 months old, although she didn't start signing back until nearly 8 months old. I haven't done a lot of signs as yet, she can sign bath, mummy, daddy, food, milk, drink, dog, hat, more, sister and sometimes brother. Although we are inconsistent sometimes with signing, I have tried to keep with it...I have noticed less tantrums when we take notice of her signs....it is a learning experience for all of us...

Deb (Australia)

**Signing Teaches Manners!** -- My name is Becca VandeWettering. I have two children; David is 3 and Anna is 1 ½. I started teaching David sign language when he was, well, a newborn. He signed his first word, "Please", when he was about 8 months old. I had people tell me all sorts of things like, "If you teach him sign language he won't learn to talk [verbally]" or "If you teach him 'complicated' ASL signs he'll just get frustrated because he can't copy them correctly."

Fortunately in my background I had met several Deaf babies and Hearing babies of Deaf parents so I knew what little ones are capable of. My

friends were constantly amazed at how David and I could talk to each other long before he could speak. He learned the signs for all done, more, eat, stop, please, patience (He didn't understand the concept of patience but just taking the time to form the sign usually cooled off his impatience), and many more.

The sign for "help" was the most helpful. When he was trying to get something to work and getting frustrated, instead of crying or yelling he learned to sign "help" and eventually "help please mama." When Anna was born David was 21 months old. He and I started signing to her right away. She has been signing since she was around 8 months old also.

Now, because my husband and I modeled the correct ASL signs to him, David is able to sign them correctly to Anna so she is learning a second language as well. David gets so excited when Anna learns a new sign and she tends to copy him more easily than she does us. Another great benefit we've seen is that, before our kids could speak, they were in the habit of saying "please" and "thank you" and asking for help instead of just getting mad. David also understands what patience means now and tells Anna to "show patience" when she is having a tough time. It's great!!

**Blossoming Communication Skills** -- I started to use a few signs with my daughter, Sabine from around 3 months of age and my husband and I have been signing for about a year now. Sabine seemed to be able to understand the signs at about 11 months or so, but she didn't sign herself. Then, she started speaking and we thought that perhaps she decided to skip the signs altogether, but about a month ago, she really started speaking and signing at the same time. It's such an amazing thing to be able to communicate with her. I'm glad that we didn't give up when we didn't see returns right away. At first we thought we were really confusing her by signing, speaking Cantonese at home, and exposing her to Mandarin at daycare. And then there's English thrown in there for good measure. But, I really believe she's communicating much earlier than she would have done had we not signed with her. The signs help us understand what she is saying, because some of the spoken words in Chinese are difficult to understand if not spoken in context or with an exact intonation. She's almost 15 months old and she has a

spoken/signing vocabulary of about 40 words. The communication skills just seemed to blossom overnight. It really is amazing.

Mona (San Mateo, California)

**Fun With Animal Signs** -- My little girl has just turned one and we've been keeping track of each new word or sign she learns from the beginning but we hadn't really noticed how big the list had gotten. As of her birthday she has about 40 words that she will either say or sign!

I signed to her from the age of about 5 months, just focusing on a few basic signs like potty (we practice EC with her too), drink, food, finished, and book. After a month or so she had still made no real signs and I was beginning to think I was wasting my time then suddenly overnight she made the connection that she could create an effect by using a sign since then it has been a veritable signing explosion!! She regularly spots things she knows and signs them to me before I've even seen them, especially animals!

We've had a couple of cute instances like when she saw her first small dog (a highland terrier) and frantically signed 'cat', when I corrected her and signed 'dog' back she frowned at me as if to say "are you sure?" Eventually we had to go over to the dog and when she saw his face she smiled and signed 'dog'!

Another was on the morning of her birthday, she was helping me unload the cutlery from the dishwasher (a new morning routine since she started walking) and when she couldn't stretch far enough to reach the cutlery at the back she looked up and signed 'finished' with a big grin.

It seems that if she doesn't 'like' a particular sign she'll use the word and vice versa so if anyone has any concerns that signing impedes speaking can I assure them it doesn't, if anything it seems to make your child more aware that the sounds that come out of your mouth actually mean something! In fact she usually signs and says the word or makes a noise with the sign, like signing 'cat' and saying "puss puss".

Initially I thought it would be a waste of time to teach her animal signs like 'hippo' or 'tiger' because when would she use them. Silly me! We use them everyday when we read books together and they now make up the bulk of her vocabulary.

I can see already that signing will be useful in minimizing tantrums as we already ask our girl to "use your words" when she gets upset and grizzly and we are (usually) able to quickly, and most importantly appropriately, respond to her needs.

I have found signing with my daughter so incredibly rewarding, I want your readers to know that the effort you put into teaching your baby to sign will be rewarded ten-fold by the pleasure you will receive at being able to communicate and share the world at a new level with your pre-verbal baby. Looking at the world through their eyes is a wonderful thing and being to 'talk' about it with them is just pure joy.

Vanja

Dunedin New Zealand

For more information on teaching your baby or toddler sign language, go to: <http://www.signing4babies.com>

<http://www.signing4babies.com/articles>

## Birthday Traditions

**Birthday Photos** -- Something I have done with my daughter is to take her photo the day she was born and then every birthday after with her dressed in a favorite shirt of my husbands that he no longer wears (obviously as a new born I just draped it around her!). You can choose any item of clothing you like, it's a great way to see how they grow each

year and when they turn 18 or 21, you can make a collage of all the photos as a special keepsake and give it to them with the clothing item!

Angela Browne  
Adelaide, South Australia  
Australia

**Birthday Date With Dad** -- My parents are missionaries, and although my dad was very busy we had a yearly tradition... for each of our birthdays (there were 5 kids in all) we had a date with dad on or around our birthday. It was always looked forward to since we'd be able to pick the place to eat at (with certain cost restrictions of course) and then we'd enjoy some daddy time. I want my daughter (and future children) to be able to do the same with my husband.

Rachelle Metzger  
Springfield, MO

**Story About The Day You Were Born** -- For birthdays the mother or father tells the child "Happy Birthday" on the exact hour the child is born. For example when I was young and still lived at home, my grandmother would find me and give me a hug and kiss and tell me "Happy Birthday" and then she would tell me a story about the day I was born. When I got older and moved on my own, I always got a call at 3:30 p.m. on Nov. 17 from my grand parents. She does this with all her grandchildren and children. Now that I have children of my own, I wake them up on the time of their birthday and sing them "Happy Birthday" and tell them a story of the day they were born. I have to wake my son up at 6:30 am and my daughter at 5 a.m. I will as long as I am alive. I hope that this tradition carries on to my children's children and so on and so on.

Adriana  
Chino, CA

**Birthday Breakfast In Bed** -- We have a tradition that we have been doing for the past 2 years with my daughter who is now 9 (can you call it a tradition if we've really only done it twice? But still we will carry on doing it)! Each year on my birthday, my husband and daughter get up before me and make me breakfast in bed as a surprise ( eggs bacon, toast, coffee and orange juice). We thought that it would be a nice surprise for us to make Coral breakfast in bed on her birthday one year.. and she felt like a queen that morning, when we walked into her bedroom with egg bacon, orange juice and a slice of toast with a glass of orange juice, and a flower on the tray, followed by her presents.... singing happy birthday...

Its nothing difficult, because you don't have to make scrambled eggs and bacon, you can simply put a bowl of cereal on the tray, with a few pancakes, and some orange juice. Its something to make her feel special, because we won't make our selves what we have made her, and that makes her feel extra special knowing that it was done just for her. And this is only done on her Birthday.

Tarryn Odell  
Empangeni, South Africa.

**Birthday Savings Account** -- For the birthday of each grandchild, we deposit a certain dollar amount into a savings account. They are not allowed to use that money unless they need it for college, a mission, or marriage. We also give them money to buy something they want.

Carol Jensen

**Birthday Dinners** -- I have been living in New Zealand for the last three years and am originally from Africa. However I am fortunate that my older sister and her family are here too. So as a family tradition, most people wait for the weekend to celebrate birthdays, as life is very hectic and rushed, especially during the week. So on every family members' birthday, even if that day falls on a week night, we always make sure we have a dinner for their birthday, as waiting for the weekend would not be

the same. Even if it means we have to eat out or eat in with a late night dinner, it's tradition!

Rochelle

**Baptisms and Hope Chests:** When a child turns eight, it is a special birthday in our church because the children are baptized. This is the birthday we give them their own set of scriptures and marking pencils, and they look forward to getting them months before the birthday is here.

The sixteenth birthday is almost magical. With the tick of the clock a teenager magically transcends into suddenly being old enough to have a driver's license, old enough to date someone of the opposite sex, etc. Grandma thinks they are also old enough to begin preparing a hope chest for the home that will one day be theirs, and so on this special birthday she gives each grandchild a beautiful afghan to begin the process.

Carol Jensen

**A Reason To Gather** -- My family always comes together on birthdays and we sing "Happy birthday," no matter where we are, everyone comes to the house where we have cake. Also, every New Years no matter where everyone is we all meet back at the house before 12:00 so we spend New Years together as a family and then we eat!  
Gail (Texas)

**Birthday Glass and Flowers** -- Whenever there is someone in the family celebrating her/his birthday on that day, the mother of the house puts a plate with a glass half-filled with water in the middle and flowers around the glass, to remind everyone of the celebration.

Evelyn

**Kid Party Ideas** -- We have a tradition with our kids where they each get to choose a theme for a “friend” party each year. It can be anything from super heroes (for the boys) to a fashion show (for the girls). We try to keep these parties as simple and inexpensive as possible. Some of our most successful parties have involved various crafts or projects. The kids can immediately get started on their project while the other guests arrive. That way they are not running around the house having balloon fights!

The finished craft also doubles as a party favor for the guests. For example, for my daughter’s fashion show party, the kids glued and decorated a picture frame out of popsicle sticks. Then we took each child’s picture as they walked down the “run-way” in their dress-up attire. We then printed the pictures and put them in the frames for the kids to take home. The kids also love to play fun party games at their birthday party that gets everyone’s attention. You can get lots of ideas for both crafts and party games at the following link:

[Kid Party Ideas](#)

## New Years Traditions

**Potluck Buffet** -- In our family, although my grandmother passed away years ago and most of the family has grown and moved away, we always meet in her house (now my house) on New Year's Eve and have a pot luck buffet beginning at 9pm and lasting into the New Year. Rarely anyone misses it -- it is our substitute for what most people do during Thanksgiving. It is the once a year we all get to see each other and be together as a family.

Luisa  
Manati PR

**New Year’s Breakfast** -- On the morning of the new year my family always goes out for breakfast. It's been our family's tradition for 7 years! Nothing like starting out the new year with a good breakfast --the most important meal of the day, or should I say year!

Rebecca Perry

**Noche Buena** -- Every year during festive season, On Christmas eve we all gather each and every family will eat together for the Noche Buena which we all prepare. Every New year it's the same thing that we all gather but we all ready in our clothes with designs circles or anything with rounds on it. We believe it's a sign of prosperity for the whole coming year. In our table we all have 12 kinds of fruits even if it's not the season for it as long as we completed. And our family tradition during these seasons we must go to the church and visit all our relatives especially grandparents and we blessed and say " Mano Po" lola or lola.

Monaliza B. Ramos  
San Pablo City, Laguna Philippines.

**Grandfather's Blessing** -- When I was growing up, New Year's Day was always spent at my maternal grandparents. Mom came from a family of 7 so there were a lot of aunts, uncles, and cousins. New Year's Day began with grandfather blessing each one of us (I believe in the catholic faith, that is called the Paternal blessing). Later, everyone gathered for dinner. In the evening, everyone joined in to sing with mom's brother who played the guitar. Grandfather step-danced ('jig' as we used to call it) and my cousin used to dance too.

Today this tradition is still carried out. Mom and my sister live close to the pacific coast, and on Christmas day, they all get together at mom's with my niece and nephew, their kids, the in laws, etc. Dad passed away so the paternal blessing is no longer given. I live on the Atlantic coast and winter in Canada is a bad time to travel, so I miss this every year. And that was a great family tradition. (Cydrina)

**Family Histories** – Every year at the first of the year, I write a “family history” of the past year. I skim through my journal from the previous year and write down the highlights for each month. I write a history each year for each of my children as well. I write my baby’s history in first person as if he were writing it. I highlight important events such as when he first sat up, first started crawling, and so forth. For the older children, I write down

all of the funny things that they said and did throughout the year. I also let them tell the events of the year in their own words.

My children's grandma actually came up with the idea of having the grandchildren do a family history each year. At the end of the year (or beginning of the new year) she will sit down with each child and ask them questions to get them talking and then she types out every word that they say. The older kids can type their own. Grandma then prints the histories along with pictures for each grandchild and compiles them into a binder for each of her kids' families.

The histories are absolutely priceless! They are not only informative, they are hilarious! We've had all sorts of things come up in the histories – especially from the younger children who are shockingly honest. When my son was five year old, he matter-of-factly explained what the doctors saw on his baby brother's ultrasound – and how they knew it was a boy and not a girl. My four year old daughter explained that her "skinny grandpa sleeps all of the time" and that her "fat grandpa was Santa Clause!"

We all get a kick out of reading the histories and the kids' love to read their own histories over and over as they get older. They are something we will treasure forever!

Wendy Jensen

<http://www.firstratefamily.com/articles>

**Setting Goals** -- Every year around the beginning of the new year our family members review our goals from the previous year and then write our new goals for the up-coming year. If you have some habits you need to over- come and some new habits that you want to acquire, then check out the following site:

[The Power Of Positive Habits](#)

This research author reveals a scientific secret that will show you how to re-program your mind and body to achieve more success automatically, lose weight automatically, improve your health automatically, have unlimited energy and motivation every day and much more!

[The Power Of Positive Habits](#)

**New Year's Cereal** -- We had a simple, but fun New Years tradition growing up. We each had a designated spot on our couch and on New Years we would each wake up to find a box of our favorite kid cereal. There would also be a few other surprises like party noise-makers and other fun party things that we could celebrate the New Year with!

Wendy Jensen

<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

## Valentines Day Traditions

**Valentine's Day Breakfast** -- A few years ago, my husband started the tradition of fixing a big breakfast every Valentines Day. He wakes up early and fixes bacon, sausage, eggs, waffles, and so on. He hangs red balloons from the light fixture and places a "love note" on the plate of each family member. My children and I have come to really look forward to these special Valentine's Day breakfasts and this year my daughter even set her alarm for 5:30 a.m. so that she could help him cook!

Wendy Jensen

Author of "Fun Family Traditions!" and "Positive Parenting Using the G.O.L.D. Standard: Developing discipline without yelling, spanking, nagging or time-out!"

<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

**Love Notes** -- One Valentines Day ritual I practice is that of writing a special "love-note" to my husband. I always include the qualities that I love most about him and mention special times that we had together that I enjoyed. There is no gift quite like that of a heart-felt expression of love from the heart! As a side note I want to put a plug in to you husbands – wives absolutely LOVE receiving personal love notes from you too! I save every love letter I have ever received from my husband and I love to read and re-read them. If you don't know how to write, or are a little "romantically challenged" then don't despair! Here is a web-site that helps you out with beautifully written love notes. You can create and send the love letters instantly, without having to write a single word, or add your own words if you want to! For more information, go to:

[Love Letters Now!](#)

## Easter/Spring Traditions

**Resurrection Dolls** -- One of the most fun religious traditions we have is to make Resurrection Dolls at Easter. It's a fun lesson and a great treat.

Recipe:

Marshmallows

Cinnamon & Sugar

Melted Butter

Packaged Crescent Rolls

Grease a cookie sheet. Have each child take their marshmallow and roll in the butter, then the spices and finally wrap it in the crescent roll. Place it in the oven and bake according to package directions. (The oven represents the tomb. The butter is the oil, the marsh-mallow is the body and the cinnamon represents the spices. The rolls represent the burial clothing. We share the story of Christ's death and burial, and of his resurrection from the New Testament. When the dolls are removed from the "tomb" you will find that the body is gone --- or it's resurrected.)

Another family tradition is to go through our toys, books and clothes during the holidays and prepare them for donation. This is a great way to teach our children to think of others and to be generous during the holidays especially. I believe it also helps them to appreciate

their gifts.

Our family is a mixed culture family. Something we enjoy is celebrating family birthdays the Mexican way. It doesn't matter if you are 1 or 100, there will be a fiesta. To us it means a pinata filled with candy and a maxican dinner. This fiesta is for the whole family to get together and eat and visit, not a party just for children. Other than hitting the pinata, we don't really play games. The best part for visitors is that the family always sends you home with a plate or two of food and cake.

Billie Garcia

Indio, CA

**Easter Camping** -- Our family camps every Easter and it is quite an affair, the kids love the tent building and firewood collecting. The highlight of the weekend is naturally the Easter egg hunt and the fishing competition as we usually camp alongside a river. There are prizes for the most patient fisherman, the largest fish, the most fish, the smallest fish, the worst looking fish etc.

Grant

**Easter Egg Bashing Contest** – Each person brings their favorite Easter egg to the family party. The person who won the bashing contest last year calls two people at a time to come forth and roll their eggs against each other's egg. The person rolling the egg that cracked is out of the game. The person whose egg didn't crack sits on the other side of the room and will have a turn bashing his/her egg during the second round. (This is when the winners take turns bashing against each other.) Eventually there will be one egg that doesn't crack. That person is titled the "Easter Egg Bashing Champion." A trophy stating "*JENSEN FAMILY EASTER EGG BASHING CONTEST*" is then presented to the lucky winner. On another line of the trophy it reads, "*We reap as we have bashed.*" Each year the name of the winner is engraved on the trophy.

The trophy then must be displayed in a prominent place in the recipient's home until he/she relinquishes it the following year to the latest winner.

Carol Jensen  
Utah

**Cottage Easter Egg Hunt** -- Easter is always a special time for our 6 kids. Since \$\$ is always an issue, our kids get to enjoy the simpler things at Easter. The whole family (Memere, Pepere, Mom, Dad, Aunts, Uncles and cousins) meets at the cottage. On Easter morning, all the adults get baskets full of eggs (plastic eggs that I stuff with little treats like chocolate, gum, and other types of candy, we wander throughout the woods and cottages to hide all our eggs for all of the children. (Our cottage is a big lot with all my husband's family established) All the kids are assigned a colour or pattern of egg, to make them easier to find "their" egg. Because of the colour and patterns, the older kids who recognize and find someone else's eggs help out the littler ones. They all have so much fun that it's never really about what's inside the eggs it's all the fun in finding the eggs that Mom, Dad or whichever family member, hid their eggs. The nice part for the adults is watching the hunt, since with all the kids together make up a gang of 13 children hunting for eggs.

*Carey-Ann Garton*

**Easter Bilbies** -- 1) I have 3 siblings and growing up it was our tradition at Easter time to crack your chocolate eggs on someone else's head to break it open before eating it. With the thin foil that is wrapped around eggs or rabbits, it very rarely made a mess but did provide us kids with lots of giggles especially if we got dad unawares. We used to believe this weird tradition was just in our family but I have recently heard of other families participating as well. Word of warning though solid eggs are band and under no circumstances are you allowed to freeze your eggs before hand.

2) Wide spread over Australia with the traditional chocolate Easter eggs and bunnies, Australian kiddies also receive Easter Bilbies. A bilby is a

native, Australian endangered mammal. Very often profits of the sales of these chocolate treats goes towards the protection of these cute animals. Growing up in my house (as with many others house holds) Easter isn't Easter without an Easter Bilby. Want to know more? Type Easter Bilby into your search engine to find out.

There are many many Australian traditions. Some are specific to towns such as the Henley on the Todd which is a dry river regatta (that's right boat races in a river bed that has no water). And some are Australian wide such as swinging on a hillhoist.

Teraisa Smith

Brisbane, Queensland formally from Sydney NSW and Devonport

Tasmania

AUSTRALIA

#### Easter Egg Hunt and Family Devotions --

1. At Easter we have an Easter egg hunt. The children's grandpa and uncle hide the eggs. They are colour coded so each child knows which colour they are to collect. We all have fun.
2. During the week we have family devotions in the morning before they go to school. We each take a turn at sharing from the word and leading the singing followed by a family prayer time.

Meriel

**Holy Week** -- Every month of April which we have a Holy Week holiday in our country (Philippines) our family spent the rest of the time in a vacation. We used to went home were our parents live. On this occasion, my 2 year old child will mingle to her grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. We are very happy to see them especially my child. This is the time where we can share stories and most of all fun with them. Our relatives were happy too when we visited them. I believe that this occasion helps a lot in building our family with the kind of family where we come from. And this will transfer to generation. Thank you very much for

your support through sending us some tips on making our family great.

Floribelle P. Cabaña

**Novruz (March 20-21)** -- My name is Nigar, mom of two kids Nabi is a boy- 6, and Aliya is a girl-5, from Azerbaijan. Before Novruz (celebrated on March 20-21) we prepare some gifts for our children but we present them on the 20th in the morning. We dye colorful eggs, then I bake national cookies (shakerbura, paklava, gogal – they are symbols of moon, star-flame, and the sun.) We grow semeni (symbol of the awaking of the nature) and put it in the middle of the table and decorate our homes with flowers and ribbons and lay the table with different delicious food. We prepare plov (from rice) and all of the family sits at the table and sings the song about Novruz.

The next day we go down town where we see a lot of fun and children are involved in many games and folk dances. They are very happy to put caps at the next door and get full off sweets and candies nuts, fruits and other things. At night they go out with their dad and jump over the bon fire. It means that they leave their illness in the burning fire. And they dream about happiness for their family, relatives and country.

Nigar

## Mother's Day Traditions

**Mother's Day Tea** -- Since my husband and I live several hours away from both our parents, we celebrate Mother's Day with our family in our own little way. We gather the family together for "Mother's Day Tea." Everyone dresses up in costumes including outlandish hats. We all take on the character of someone from a different area or country and attempt to speak in the accent from that county.

For example, one year my husband wore a French Beret and spoke with a French accent. I was a Southern Belle and spoke with a Southern

Accent. Our six children ages 11 and under, also dress up and try and speak with accents. One year our daughter spoke with a British accent the entire time. My husband stays inside and the kids and I all go outside and line up. Then we ring the doorbell one at a time beginning with the youngest child and going on up.

My husband welcomes everyone in one at a time as he plays his character and invites everyone to tea. He takes a picture of each child as they enter the home. Then I come in (the guest of honor) and everyone shouts, "Mother!" in their own accent. Then we have a tea party with all sorts of yummy desserts and milk. Afterwards we take family pictures with the self-timer and we do some crazy shots. Then my husband hooks the digital camera up to the TV and we watch all of the pictures as a slide show. We laugh and laugh as we watch our family dressed up and doing funny poses! This tradition makes Mother's Day fun for all of us!

Rick and Wendy Jensen

<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

## Graduation Traditions

**Seminary Graduation** -- One grandmother keeps a journal, and when her grandchildren graduate from seminary (religious classes taken as released time at High School), the grandmother goes through eighteen years of journal entries and picks out the things she has written about that child.

For example, she writes about the day the child was born and the feelings she had as she first looked into the angelic face of that little grandchild. She writes about special things they have done together when the

grandchild has slept over or has been visiting at her home. She mentions cute things the child has said or done throughout the years.

She writes about the day when the grandchild was baptized and the feelings she had as well as the feelings the grandchild described that day. She mentions the favorite foods the grandchild had served for his/her celebration dinner following the baptism.

This grandmother takes shorthand, and she recorded various blessings pronounced on her grandchildren throughout their lives. These too are included into the history as well as many other things. The history is entitled "*Grandma's Memories of (name of grandchild)*."

After the family attends the seminary graduation exercises, they all go back to the home of that grandchild, and the grandchild reads "Grandma's Memories" to the family. It always brings a lot of laughs and often tears are shed. It's a very special, spiritual time of reflection.

Carol Jensen

**Graduation Doll** -- This grandma makes a ceramic doll for each grandchild. About a month before the grandchild graduates from high school, Grandma paints the eyes, hair, and skin tones of the doll the same colors as that of her grandchild. The doll is wearing the traditional graduation cap and gown, and they are painted in the appropriate school colors, and the small yearbook the doll is holding has the name of the school written on it. The grandchild's name is written on the diploma as well as the year of the graduation. This little gift becomes a special keepsake for the grandchild.

The grandchild also receives a graduation present. He/she is told how much money can be spent and that it has to be spent on something lasting, and then he/she must decide how to spent the money. Grandma goes shopping with the grandchild to purchase the special gift.

Carol Jensen

## Father's Day Traditions

**Father's Day Photo** -- Here is a family tradition of ours. Prior to every Father's Day I make a sign (We love you Daddy) and have the children pose with it while I take a photo. I frame it and it is part of their Daddy's present on the day and he has a yearly updated photo which is really nice to watch how they are growing year by year. I started with our daughter and now, this year, she can pose with her new little brother. I look forward to all the years ahead and all the photos we can collect with the same little sign.

Catherine

**Father's Day Flee** -- A few years ago my husband started a new tradition with our family called "Father's Day Flee." Our friends say that he is the only person they know who actually "name" their vacations! Anyway, this annual event involves some type of fun (and educational) trip for the whole family around Father's Day. Sometimes we go to a time-share condo and other times we go camping. Both are great! We always have lots of fun activities such as swimming, hiking, tennis and so forth.

What makes this trip unique however, is the teaching that goes on. Every year we come up with a "theme" for the trip. Then my husband prints out official invitations and mails them to each member of the family. We often invite another family or two along and he mails each of them an invitation as well. The kids are always so excited to receive their own invitation in the mail!

Then Dad assigns different lesson topics to each member of the family to present at various times during the trip on theme-related topics that include values that we hold dear. It is a time of fun, learning, spirituality, and bonding of family and friends!

Rick and Wendy Jensen

<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

## Summer Traditions

**Camping at the Lake** -- In our family, it is tradition that every year when summer hits, we buy tons of fruit and head out for the lake. We camp for one week with the family. We cut the fruit up and the kids love it. This brings us closer every year and it's a great and fun way to start the summer out. The kids have so much fun and they're able to develop a sense of closeness with our families. Now that I am married and have a five month, we are very excited to pass the tradition along.

Jacy Pennington

**Family Summer Games and BBQ** -- There are a few things that we love doing as a family. We only do this once a year during the summer. Anyway we have a family get together: brothers, sisters, uncles, aunties, you name them they come. We arrange it that we have a barbeque as well. Then we all arrange ourselves into different teams, and plays volley ball, darts, cricket, tug of war etc. And the team that wins receives small cups. It is great fun and it something that my kids look forward to every year.

Lesley

**Grand-Children's Day** -- One grandmother believes that because we have mother's day, father's day, etc. that there should also be a special time set aside to honor grandchildren, so one evening each summer Grandma and Grandpa invite all of their grandchildren to a sleepover. They spend the evening hours doing things that Grandma and Grandpa did as children, such as having an old-fashioned taffy pull or teaching the grandchildren how to make homemade noodles. They also spend time learning about family members who have passed on.

When the grandchildren wake up the following morning, they go outside and pick their favorite cereal off the tree in the back yard. (Grandpa takes small cereal boxes and ties them to the tree before the children woke up.)

It doesn't matter how old the grandchildren are, they all look forward to Grandchildren's Day at Grandma and Grandpa's.

Beverly

## Beginning School Traditions

**New School Year Celebration** -- Coming to the end of any school holiday is always a bit of a downer for our family after enjoying the freedom to just be ourselves. My children find it hard to adjust to early mornings after having fun late nights, so in order to keep the stress levels of a new term to a minimum we get up extra early and zot off to a local beauty spot to fly kites or have a nice walk and cook breakfast on our camping stove. Then we pile into the car and get to school just in time. A great way to celebrate the beginning of a new term and a sneaky way of making the children sleep extra early that night and thus up early the next day. .... and yes we do this whatever the weather. I remember having to make hats out of newspaper because it was so windy my daughter could not eat her breakfast due to her hair blowing in her face!!

Karen

**End Of The Day** -- If there is anything I dread, its having to force my children out of bed to school. So I had to come up with a way of making them go to bed early for them to be early the next morning. I got an idea, supper is ready by 6.30pm, and by 7pm the table is set. By 7:30 p.m., I go to their bedroom and start arranging the next day's clothes to wear, that way they follow me easily, and then I start by making stories lying on one of their beds that way they are warmed, and by 8:00 p.m. we are saying the bedtime prayer. I do not need to wake them up in the morning, they are always awake by 5:45 a.m.

Gladys Kinuthia  
Nairobi-Kenya

**Children's Miracle Music** -- To help everyone get going in the morning, we have a CD that we use called "Children's Miracle Music." There is a song for various activities such as getting up, brushing teeth, eating breakfast, rinsing breakfast dish, and doing morning chores. There is also a CD for the evening activities which include evening chores, brushing teeth, getting on pajamas and putting clothes away and so forth.

The kids earn points by finishing each job or activity before the song/s end. When they get 100 points then they earn a private date with mom or dad! This makes getting ready fun! Our kids love it and it really helps our morning and evening routines to go much more smoothly! For more information, go to:

[Children's Miracle Music](#)

**Homework Treats** -- The beginning of school also means homework and school projects. We have a tradition of designating certain nights of the week as "homework nights." All of the children do their homework at the same time and mom and/or dad is there to help anyone who needs help. For the younger children who are not yet in school, Dad prints off worksheets from the computer for the kids to trace and color letters. If you don't have time to make your own, you can find ideas here:

[ABC Fun & 1-2-3](#)

Our pre-schooler and toddler feel really big since they get to do "homework" too! To make it even more fun, we make "homework treats" like yummy smoothies, popcorn, or chocolate pudding! All of the family can get involved with bigger homework projects like the annual science fair. Again, if you don't have time to find a project, check out the following sites for ideas:

[Science Project Help](#)

### [24 Hour Science Projects](#)

We feel it is really important to show our kids that we value education and that we are willing to put forth the necessary effort to learn!

Wendy Jensen

<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

## Halloween Traditions

**Scary Dinner** -- My family gets together with Grandma and Grandpa and all of their children and grandchildren for a big Halloween party every year! Everyone dresses up in Halloween Costumes and plays games such as bobbing for apples and fishing in a fish pond for prizes. The grown-ups all hide in various areas around the house and the kids go find them and call out, "trick-or-treat!"

The highlight of the night however, is the infamous "SCARY DINNER!!" Everyone has to bring a food dish that either looks like something else or looks scary or fun. For example, one time my mother-in-law made lemonade and served it in a bed-pan. She purchased Vienna sausages and stuck fake fingernails in the top of each one so that it looked like fingers.

A family member might color their food with green food coloring and tell everyone that it is mold or explain that the spaghetti is worms covered in blood. Everyone gets to tell their fabricated story of where they got their food. There have been some wild and crazy stories! Everyone exclaims, "Ooh, gross!" Then we all dig in and eat the food (that is if we still have a stomach for it!)"

Wendy Jensen

<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

**Carving and Painting Pumpkins** -- Every year right before Halloween, our family carves or paints pumpkins together. It is an activity that our children always look forward too! For those of you who want some fun

ideas for Halloween celebrations, then “Easy Pumpkin Painting” is a fun little e-book with lots of Halloween ideas including pumpkin painting, face painting, crafts, games, decorations, and recipes. You can check out all of the Halloween fun at this web-site:

[Easy Pumpkin Painting](#)

**Pumpkin Festival** -- Every October, our family goes up to New Hampshire for the pumpkin festival, and we stay at my mother's cousin's house. It is very fun and we get to stay with our cousins that we don't get to see very much.

## Christmas Traditions

**Christmas Birthday Cake** -- This tradition is one that is dealing with Christmas. After the kids wake up we all meet in the hallway with a birthday cake. As we are walking to the Christmas tree one person puts in front of the tree a nativity scene and we all sing happy birthday to baby Jesus. Then we all take turns saying what we are giving Jesus for Christmas (good grades, stopping a bad habit, volunteering at a homeless shelter, etc.) and then we start the unwrapping of presents. It is a change and remembering the real reason for Christmas is priceless.

Christine Johnston

**Making Snapshots into Christmas Ornaments** -- My name is Jennifer Regan, and I am from Peotone, Illinois. My husband Joseph and I have a 17 month old daughter, Rebecca, who has about a 50 word sign language vocabulary- we are so proud! Anyway, we began the tradition of collecting snapshots from throughout the year, and then turning them into Christmas tree ornaments. We even bought a small, 4-foot tree that will be just for her. Each year, we will add new ornaments, and she will be able to see how much she has grown and changed over time. Each picture that we choose has a memorable story to go with it, so we can reminisce when

she asks about them as she gets older. We also want her to realize that she is the greatest gift we ever could have asked for. We hope to carry on this tradition for all of our future children as well. Today's Christmas celebrations seem so hurried and rushed, but this tradition helps us to slow down and savor the moments every time we look at the beautifully decorated tree. Happy Holidays!

Jennifer Regan (Peotone, Illinois)

**Christmas Birthday Party** -- One tradition that our family shares is on Christmas. Along with the family Christmas dinner, we have a birthday cake, with candles for the kids to blow out and party plates, and sometimes party hats. We make sure to sing Happy Birthday to Jesus during our special family time. We want our children to remember why we are celebrating Christmas. That it is really about the birth of Jesus and not just presents.

Joy

**Baby Shoe Ornaments** -- A tradition we have is that every year I place all of my children's and grandchildren's baby shoes on my Christmas Tree. Also included are my mother's baby shoe and teething ring, my husband's baby sandals, my father-in-law's shoe, my sister's shoes and even a couple of unidentified family baby shoes. I watch each year as these children (and grown ups) go to the tree and look to find their shoes. I love the look on their faces and wouldn't even consider setting up a tree without my collection of baby shoes. I am so glad I started doing this years ago, since in many cases baby shoes seem to get lost as years go by.

Robert and Marilyn Fluitt  
Castroville, Texas

**Christmas Eve PJ's** -- As my husband and I have had our first child this year, we've been discussing our favorite traditions from our childhood so we can begin new traditions for our growing family. Our two favorite traditions occur on Christmas Eve.

My Mother would always leave a gift under the tree on Christmas Eve marked "open me first." Inside was a brand new set of warm cozy PJs. We would immediately put them on and then hang our stockings. Despite having new cozy PJ's, it was still too difficult to go sleep.

My husband's Father always read 'Twas The Night Before Christmas' on Christmas Eve just before they were wisked away to bed. All three kids would pile in his lap while he read in front of the fireplace. We plan to incorporate both traditions with our new family.

Sandi Juliano  
Mountain View, CA

**Gingerbread Houses** -- My husband's family had a tradition of always making a gingerbread house around Christmas time. Since we have married, his family has become quite scattered between the U.S and Australia, but we have kept the tradition alive by having a 'friendly gingerbread competition' where all family members make a gingerbread house, take a photo and post it on the net. His mum is the judge and everyone is usually a winner with her creative categories!

My husband and I have taken the tradition further by nominating a family in our community who we will give our gingerbread creation to when we are finished. This tradition has helped keep not only our extended family together, but has also become an act of service... and we have lots of fun in the process!

Heather Ireland, Tasmania, Australia

**Special Ornaments** -- On the start of the 12th day, we go get a fresh tree together. We take out all our ornaments and put them in a basket next to the tree. Each night we pick several to put on the tree, (we always waited until Daddy got home). On Christmas Eve we unwrap a very special gift

for each of the family. It's a new ornament that represents something special for that year. For example, my daughter (6) was totally into unicorns, so that is what we gave her. My son (4) was Thomas the Tank crazy so he was given a Thomas ornament.

This is mostly Mother's doing and they are overjoyed and look forward to see what it could be this year. Plus they get so much joy in hanging their very own ornament on the tree. As I see it once they grow up, move away and start their own family, all those ornaments will go with them with so many wonderful memories. Not so much a tradition but on Christmas day it takes us all day and maybe the next to open all the gifts. No we don't have loads of presents.

I truly love Christmas and family being together. Each person takes a turn opening a present and giving thanks to the person who gave it and then we play/read/admire and all that comes with that gift. I just think for younger children they should really enjoy the gift they have been given. As a growing family we are learning each day new traditions and making memories.

Alana

**Living Christmas Tree** -- The tradition I remember is the last week before Christmas. We all sang in the "Living Christmas Tree" at our church. It went on for two weeks before Christmas. Christmas Eve we attended church and then when we got home we got to open one present. Mom got to pick. It was always a new pair of PJ's for pictures Christmas Morning. We watched "It's a Wonderful Life" and went to bed, trying to stay awake to hear Santa Come on the roof and down our chimney.

Linda Conrad

**Christmas Portraits** -- We always get a family portrait at Christmas time and those are our "cards." We enclose a letter about the year's highlights and that way they can see how much Kimie, our daughter, has changed.

JoAnn M. Gibbs, CPS, MOS

**Christmas Street Parties** -- One Australian tradition is Christmas street parties. Pretty much from the start of December all over suburbia Australia Streets will close down, BBQs from the backyards are bought out to the streets as well as outside chairs tables and umbrellas (for the sun) are used as neighbors meet to eat, drink and play cricket in the middle of the road. Of course being summer at Christmas time here, seafood is a favorite (chuck another shrimp on the barby)!

Teraisa Smith

Brisbane, Queensland formally from Sydney NSW and Devonport  
Tasmania  
AUSTRALIA

**Christmas pockets** -- 1. Christmas pockets or advent calendar is homemade and I put things that the kids like. Cheap pens, cars, stickers and no lollies unlike the ones you buy.

2. First weekend in December we decorate the Christmas tree and have a huge family Christmas party (50+ of family). Christmas day is spent with our little family units as we all live hours away from each other.

3. Christmas Eve the whole family wears put on new pj's after tea to meet Santa in.

Christmas is a special time for my family.

Christina

**Christmas Tree Gift** -- My family tradition at Christmas time is going to get a Christmas Tree. About 12 years ago when my first daughter was about 12 months old we were financially strapped with my husband out of work. We agreed that this year we would not buy one as they were too much money. It was Christmas eve, there was a knock at the door, it wasn't Santa, it was my Father-in-law and brother-in-law with a Christmas tree. We were so surprised and happy. My father-in-law said, "We got you a tree -- you cannot have Christmas without a Tree!" They had cut down a tree. My father-in-law passed away 7 years ago. Every Christmas when we go to get a tree I think about that night and the wonderful memory of it.

Jennifer

**Traditional Turkey** -- (1) I have always done our Christmas or Thanksgiving turkey at night. It is the last thing I do before going to bed...put it in the oven. We wake up to the wonderful aroma the following morning (I set the clock if it is time to take it out of the oven). When I failed to do this a few years ago after our sons all moved out of the house, even my husband said something was missing.

Of course, the turkey never gets to the table with wings, sometimes without legs, too, and always with holes punched in the breast where people take a bite. But, that's what it's all about.

(2) Instead of letting the kids dive into the Christmas presents, it has always been a tradition that I would make an overnight coffee cake and something really good to eat while we are unwrapping the gifts. Sometimes Champagne, or mimosas (not for the kids). Someone plays Santa, and we each unwrap our gifts, one at a time, and it takes most of the morning. Our kids are grown now, but when they are home for the holiday, we still do it.

Daren Lamb  
Author/Speaker  
[www.darenlamb.com](http://www.darenlamb.com)

**Organic Grown Salmon** -- One of our traditions is to serve Organic grown Salmon for our dinner at Christmas, with organic vegetables and fruits - making our inner bodies holy in honor of the day.

**Hidden Stockings** -- On Christmas morning, my siblings & I used to wake up in the wee hours to open our stockings & subsequently wake my parents far too early for their liking. Hence, my mother started hiding our stockings in the most imaginative places, to give us more to keep us occupied. Since then, it wasn't only the stocking we looked forward to, but the hunt. She hid them in the china cabinet, pinned them to the back of the living room drapes, etc. One year she made the mistake of hiding a stocking (with an orange in the toe) under the couch cushions. We couldn't find it, until my father sat on it later. I don't need to tell you what happens when a 200lb man sits on a juicy orange.

Karen Reid Chupa

**Our Own Santa** -- My favorite family tradition is getting my loved ones together on Christmas Eve and opening presents. When we were children my dad would dress up as Santa and pass the presents out. We always felt so special that Santa would choose to come to OUR house and spend Christmas Eve with us. We didn't have much growing up, so this was extraordinary for us. My father is no longer with me in body, but in spirit and memories...he'll live on forever!!!

April Smitley  
Marietta, Ohio

**Noel Night** -- Growing up, my grandma and my mother would take us children to Noel night every year. This is something that is native to Detroit, but it is a display of the different types of arts, cuisines, and customs that different nationalities from around the world have incorporated into Christmas time. We used to walk in the area of downtown where all the museums and art galleries were located and there would be so many arts and crafts and different free foods from around the world. We even got to ride on the Clydesdale horses that the police ride on. It taught us how different people celebrated Christmas. But most importantly, we (as children) felt like we had a wonderful night on the town and we got to spend time having fun with our family. I have only been married for two and a half years now and I am trying to incorporate this family tradition into my own family. We have been to Noel Night as a family once. If you have anything like this where you live, I encourage you to go and get a wonderful family bonding experience!

Latasha  
Detroit, MI

**Together As A Family** -- Every Christmas or New Year, we really make it a point to be together as a family. We go to our aunt's place in Novaliches to celebrate Christmas or New Year. We're the only family

staying in Manila because most of our relatives are in the province.

Mel  
Phillippines

**Treasured Gifts** -- At Christmas, my husband gives each of our children a book. In the front of each book, he writes a letter of love and appreciation to that particular child. Our children treasure these books and love to read and reread the letters even more than the book. These letters mean so much to our children that I typed all of the letters onto the computer just in case any of the books were ever lost.

Jane Metcalf  
SLC, Utah

**Pajama Pictures** -- We have a family tradition that was passed down from my parents. On Christmas Eve we were allow to open one gift and the gift was always pajamas. Even to this day we still do this and our children are married and we have a grandchild. It is fun to see what kind of pajamas everyone receives. Then on Christmas we get our pictures taken with in new pajamas.

Shannon Bradley

**Capture The Moment** -- Every year after Thanksgiving, we go to buy a live Christmas tree. I had the idea of taking along a camera to capture the moment. So, we take photos on the way there, during the selection (most of the time it's a photo of my husband picking a tree with the kids running around in the background NOT picking a tree - it adds humor to the annual event). We also snap a picture of the person who cuts the tree, the loading of the tree and then ultimately the family decorating the tree. We normally have a fire, hot chocolate, s'mores, and Rudolph or Frosty running on the TV just to add some extra fun. I try to get as many goofy shots as genuine ones so there is a good mixture. The pictures are developed and left in our yearly Christmas photo album on the coffee table for others to look at during the holidays. People love the idea and go on and on about how much fun it is to see our holiday come to completion.

Amy Gail Miller

**Silent Night, Holy Night** -- Christmas time is my family's favorite time of the year. It so happens that in our family about ever year there is a new addition to our family. So after midnight mass we gather at my grandparent's house for a light meal and presents. Before we can do any of that we stand in a circle and say a prayer. My grandmother invites the youngest grandchild to put the baby Jesus in the manger and then we all sing "Silent Night Holy Night." It is something we all look forward to all year long.

Adriana (Chino, CA)

**A Christmas Riddle** -- At Christmas time for each gift you had to put a riddle to it and could not open until you guessed; For example: a box of chocolate coins would say: A pirates life for me or Ahhh ya scalawag. The song from Disneylands "Pirates of Carribean".

Terri Dente  
Sacramento, CA

**Christmas Countdown Poster** -- Christmas is my favorite time for tradition! Every Christmas we make our son, Thor, a Christmas countdown poster. This past year it was a stocking. Every night before he goes to bed he puts a sticker on the number (day) and we count how many days until Christmas. My home is small, so I put up three small trees and decorate 1 for Thor, (red) 1 for Daddy( football theme) and 1 for me (purple and Thor's homemade Christmas ornaments) we start in the living room and end in the kitchen with Thor being the last to open. I have a bar where I put out juice, milk, coffee and flavored breads for breakfast! This gives us time to take pictures, see what each other received and makes opening gifts take a little longer. Thor is saved for last, he is ready to open and see what is in his packages! For his bedtime stories, I have a few Christmas books that we read, then I put the carols on the radio.

Robin

**Surprise Stop From Santa's Elves** -- As a child it was always fun to get to open one of our gifts on Christmas Eve. It made the Christmas morning wait that much easier. Now that I have children of my own, my husband and I decided to start a Christmas Eve tradition of our own. Instead of our children (who are now 3 and 5), opening a gift from under the tree on Christmas Eve, Santa's elves make a surprise stop at our house. The doorbell mysteriously rings (with help from dad at the back door), and when the children open the door they find a little present for each of them. It reminds them that Santa knows where they live, and adds that much more excitement to Christmas. It is all about children at Christmas, and so much fun too!

Verna Mabin

**Christmas Service** -- My parents are missionaries in Argentina, but Christmas is still Christmas down there (even in 90 degree weather) and every Christmas my family would go Christmas caroling to the shut-ins of our church and also to other families if we had time. It wasn't something I really enjoyed as a teenager, but I know many families were blessed by it, and I want to continue that with my children.

Rachelle Metzger (Springfield, MO)

**San Francisco Trolleys** -- Since we live about 30 minutes outside the great city of San Francisco, we take advantage of the "off-season" at Christmas time to travel into the city. Of course there are many fun and exciting things in San Francisco, but we have made riding the trolleys our new tradition at Christmas time. We bundle up, take our camera, and enjoy the ride on the old fashioned trolley through the city, being able to see all the historic buildings and smell all the smells, and listen to our children. Afterward we go to Ghirali Square and have a delicious, rich cup of hot chocolate.

Melissa Salcido

## All year round!

**Love Tickets** -- We have a vase sitting on our fireplace mantle, which we call the "Love Jar." We also have a stack of little square papers in a container of our kitchen cup-board which we use for "love tickets." If we see our children doing a kind deed for a member of the family, or for someone else, then we (or another member of the family) gives that person a "love ticket." We acknowledge our child for his or her kind act and write out the child's name and what they did, on one of the pieces of papers in our cup-board and put it in the love jar. Throughout the week, our children love to go peek inside the love jar and see how many "love tickets" each of them have. On Sunday we gather the family together and have a drawing from our love jar. We draw three names out of the love jar and read what each person did to earn that love ticket. The three winners receive three "tickets" as their reward. Then we pull out all of the other love tickets and read all of the nice things that the children did to earn their love tickets. Our children love it and it helps them to be more aware of showing kindness to others!

The tickets are taken from our book "Positive Parenting: Developing Discipline Using the G.O.L.D. Standard" available at:

<http://www.firstratefamily.com>

Rick and Wendy Jensen

**Simple Ways To Say "I Love You!"** -- My baby Josh is only just over 13 months old so we haven't got any family traditions established yet, but there are two things that my husband and I have done since just after we were married and that is the following:

1. Whoever gets to the bathroom first to brush their teeth will put toothpaste on the other persons toothbrush as well, so when the other person comes to brush their teeth, although so small an action, it lets you know that someone is thinking about you and loves you. It's something special.
2. We have 3 private signing codes, three squeezes of the hand, or three finger raised, or even three flashes of the car lights if we happen to be in

two separate cars, one behind the other, means "I Love You" and the other will respond in kind with two of the same, ie: two squeezes, two fingers or two light flashes, which simply means, Me Too.

Unfortunately the third signing which is four of the above or similar signing just happens to be censored for our knowledge only, but it is certainly nice to be able to communicate with each other in our own language.

Tracey

**Fall Chicken Stew** -- I have 10 grandchildren and I am semi-retired. I always do pumpkin carving with my grandchildren on October. We line them up on a long table and they really enjoy it. They get to take each creation home with them afterward. At Christmas we have craft sessions. I have a lot of supplies, old t-shirts to wear, and they print out crafts from the computer and try to do them for gifts. Sometimes they make decorations too. Also, every 3 months or so we have a family birthday cookout at my house. Those people having birthdays receive a card made by my youngest grandson and signed by everyone that comes to the party. Of course we still have Thanksgiving "drop by" Dinners, also Easter Dinners. We enjoy the Fall Chicken Stew. My husband makes homemade chicken stew in a big iron pot in the back yard. We have a fire to roast hot dogs, and lots of sides and desserts too. We have music with string instruments [family plays]. I set up tents in the back yard for the children that like to campout. Sometimes they play all night!

Deborah Canter from Winston Salem,N.C.

**Religious Celebrations** -- My name is Polly and I'm from Malaysia. My baby Amber Maryanne just got baptized in a Roman Catholic Church. This is part of our religious practice and we are very happy to celebrate it with close family members and friends.

**Family Trips To India** -- I'm an Indian Residing in Kuwait (the Gulf). Our family trips to India once in 2 year or sometimes yearly. Every year we plan on something really great to do as a family. For a break, we had been to the United States but somehow India seems to be much more interesting to us. Here's according to me the easiest way to know America - Watch the TV! Well, that's not the case in India. There is a diversity of culture. So we, as a family go visiting to different places in India. This year we did something very different. We went to visit our grandmother's sisters and brothers. It's fun to link our family people to each other and realize how big it is. Today we are so engrossed in our small family of 4 that we tend to forget that these grannys actually exist. It was great to have their blessings. I believe that it is the duty of the head of the family to decide on what to do each year. It need not be traditional as in the same thing but must be focused on the fact that kids must feel the togetherness, the time away from kids due to work and the busy times at home.

Another thing our family does every night before sleep is Pray! It's a family prayer. It's a tradition and there's a feeling of togetherness. Sometimes it's short, sometimes long. One of the members of the family prays and it's in turn. After the prayer, if there's any burden or anything to talk about we talk and discuss! We then kiss our parents goodnight and rush to bed! Well, now I stay in a hostel and I miss this. I'm glad we had it because it increased my relationship with both God and my parents. They say, "Families that pray together, stays together." I believe it's true!

Teena

**Prayer Of Angelus** -- I would like to share this simple tradition that runs in our family - the blessing of hand every 6:00 PM in time with "Prayer of Angelus". Every time we hear the clock strike or hear the bell in the church at 6:00 PM, we see to it that all kids in the house will stop playing and bless all the elders. It is done by, using the right hand, the child will get also the right hand of the father and put in his/her forehead saying "Bless Daddy." The kids will then do the same to Mommy, sister, brother, anybody older than him/her. In this way, we can train the children to respect elders.

Annie C. Patrica (Siquijor Island, Phillipines)

**Silver Bowl With A Silver Spoon** -- When an infant reaches the age of 1 year and the first teeth come in, if the first tooth is the on the upper Jaw then it is not considered good and the misfortune may come on the maternal Uncle. There is a tradition that to nullify the ill effects maternal uncle has to feed the baby rice-milk in a Silver Bowl with a silver spoon. It is very prominent custom and practiced and enjoyed by the complete family.

Anand Vikram

**Subtle Signals of Love!** -- We have a "few" things that are special to our family....

We are from Fort Wayne, IN and our daughter, Kimie, arrived from the Philippines on January 10, 2003 at 7 1/2 years old. So, every year on January 10th, we go out for a special dinner to celebrate her arrival. Now, we will add January 27th to our celebration list since we finalized her adoption on 01/27/06 when she was 10 1/2.

When my daughter and I are in public (and she might be embarrassed if I told her I loved her), we've come up with our signal that means "I love you". Basically, we tug on an earlobe (or maybe even both).

Another thing that Brian (my husband) and I started before Kimie came, but have passed on to her is the "high thumb." Instead of a high five that can be dangerous with a kid who doesn't know how hard they are hitting and cannot be done subtly, we started a high thumb and basically do a thumbs up and then do the high five motion with our thumbs. It's subtle, can be done in public places without bodily harm and from what I've seen, completely ours!!

Of course, there is the annual first day of school picture in front of the school!! The annual family picture and letter we send out at Christmas to our friends and family (I've been scolded when a letter has not been received because they look forward to it so much.) The Christmas Eve service etc.

JoAnn M. Gibbs, CPS, MOS

**Thought For The Day** -- While raising our family, we put "A Thought for Today" on the refrigerator (an inspirational thought/quote made large on the computer). Our families are exposed to so much that is negative each day, this is one way to help counteract it with something positive. A lot of important teaching can be passed on through short quotes to help our youth (and adults). We give packets of these thoughts for gifts also.

<http://www.margiesmessages.com> (link to hundreds of these thoughts/quotes--some in PDF, ready to print)

Marjorie Westra

**Floating Fears Away!** -- Here is a great on I use for my kids, and works great for me too. Whenever they are scared of monsters, or whatever, I get them to imagine a balloon, big, what color is it? Then we sweep all the monsters into the balloon, we search the corners for monsters and anything that belongs to the monsters have to go into the balloon too. Then we tie it up tight, and ask for the help of Jesus (following our faith) and we throw the balloon up into the sky so high. We watch it fly past the moon, past the planets and burn up in the sun. It is very important that it get to the sun because they burn up and can never return. I have done this with my problems many times, put them in a balloon and watch them float away!

Martha

**Watching my little girl grow:**

I make hand and foot prints of my baby monthly so I can watch her grow, and every few months I photograph my babies hands holding onto her dads and my hand and photo scrapbook it all. I took a photo of her wearing her dad's shirt, and one of my dresses and will every few months till she gets to 1 year and then again every year, till she gets to about 21. It another way to watch her grow.

**Twin Tradition:**

I am an identical Twin, My twin sister lives in Ireland and I live in USA. I am 28 and moved here when I was 22. When we were 21 we received these joke bloomers as a gift. They were signed by everyone at our 21st Birthday Party. Since then, we have been signing them, leaving a message and sending them back and forth from Ireland to USA. This Year it was my turn to have them for the year. Next Year my twin will have them, so I will send them back. Also on our Birthday, and New Years day, we call the other at exactly 1 minute past midnight our time. Even though we are 5hrs apart time wise, it's fun. When I call at 12.01 it's 5.01am in Ireland. When she calls me at 12.01 it's 7.01 p.m. my time. We also call again at 5.10pm our time because we were born at that time.

**Sharing Babies:**

My identical twin and I have baby girls 3 months apart. We share baby clothes, I send her clothes too big for my little girl, she sends clothes too small for her baby girl. We take photos of our girls in the same outfit and scrapbook it. We also put them on the same page so it is often hard to tell who is who. It's fun because as we are identical, our babies are very similar-like sisters.

**Praying for people:** When someone is sick, has died, or is in trouble. I light candles for the whole day, to remind me all day of them, and pray for them while the candle is lighting..

Renee

**Board Games During Thunderstorms** -- We have bad thunderstorms here in Johannesburg (South Africa), so when lightning gets really bad we always switch most appliances off and un-plug them. Then we take our card and board games and start playing until it's time to get the children to bed. My daughter (4) enjoys this very much and can't wait for her baby brother to join us.

I get off early on a Friday from work. So every Friday I pick up the kids and then we go and get ice-cream at a local ice-cream shop. The owner knows us very well by now and already knows our favorite flavors.

When someone close to us is having a birthday, my daughter and I bake a small cake especially for that person. My daughter chooses the flavor of

the cake and also how we are going to decorate it. That's when our fun begins.

When my husband's father was still alive he used to take his grandchildren when they were six weeks old and give them a piece of Lamb roast, which they sucked on until it was white. He always said they were never too young to learn to eat meat.

Marisel Van Den Heever  
Johannesburg  
South Africa

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**Family Memories** -- I grew up in a family of nine children, and I was the oldest. We had many family traditions, and I have one I cherished from each parent. My mother would always take the youngest child and hold him/her up to a picture of The Sacred Heart of Jesus which hung in their bedroom. She would explain about Jesus and then say "Say good-night Sweet Jesus". The rest of us who were old enough would kneel on the floor and say our prayers while mom held the baby. My mother told us that she always knelt to pray and when she was in the army and nurses training during World War II, the other nurses were astounded that she did this.

She was Irish, and liked to have a good time. She also cared about people and passed the gift of compassion down to her children. Each Friday night we would have what was called "Friday Night Party". Mother would give each of us a box of animal crackers and a glass of soda pop. We watched "I Remember Mama" then in later years, "Leave It To Beaver" while we munched. This treat was taken away a few times during our young lives when we misbehaved.

My father liked to be the first one in church, sitting in the front, with his very large family. He never lifted a finger to help my mother, but when he was ready to leave for church, he would go outside and ring the door bell as a sign to her to hurry up. On Saturday night we all got our hair washed, rolled into curls with bobby pins and then our fingernails were painted. Still, mother had to dress most of us for church so she hated it when he went outside and rang the doorbell. Some Saturday mornings

he would bring her breakfast in bed and we enjoyed seeing her spoiled in this small way. He also went out every Thanksgiving morning to a farm and picked up fresh cider for our meal.

On Easter he brought home a beautiful Easter Lily for our family and once his children got married, we would each receive a lily on Easter. He had a weakness for chocolate. On Easter morning none of us had a bunny with ears. Daddy would raid the baskets early in the morning and nibble off all the solid ears on the bunnies. We expected it and it made us laugh. God Bless the American Family!

Mimi Mitchell (Florida)

**Dots of Learning** -- As part of our rituals, we have a little chart for each kid, which we go through on a daily basis and once they are in bed. There are five or six "items" referring to tasks that should have been accomplished throughout the day, such as "Being nice to everyone," "Doing my homework," "Tidying my room" or more specific ones adjusted to each child, such as "Playing the piano" or "Remembering my manners at the table." Depending on how they manage, you can change some of these every month or so. We mark with a green dot (big and full) those which were fully accomplished, with a big "empty" green dot (a green circle) those which were not accomplished but at least attempted, with an "empty" red dot (a red circle) those which were impossible to achieve for one or other reason (unintentionally) and with a full red dot those which were ignored or voluntarily postponed or rejected.

The conditions are that there should be at least three green dots (out of seven, right now) a day, and that if they achieve some 40% (not half of them, but almost) green dots in a week (providing that things have moved to better through the week) they get something special, which is previously agreed, on Sunday. These prizes (which are never material, but involve the four of us doing something together like eating out, going somewhere special (as to the cinema with a huge bucket of popcorn to share), staying awake to read half an hour more than usual - on Saturday - or the like) are something very special and strongly motivating for them.

When they have a bad day (or maybe two) and they see so many red

dots and feel incapable of bettering that, it is my moment to tell them that no one is perfect, that we do not expect them to be, but that we do expect them to try improve every day. I tell them I trust them and I am sure they will manage to make things look up...and they just do. Sometimes I even tell them, "if this were my chart, I am sure I would have gotten two, or three, or one red dots today. But still, no one is perfect. I also have bad days and I only hope I can do it better tomorrow. So can you, don't you think?" They like to hear that from me.

Blanca

**Family Night** -- One of our family traditions is family night which is on Wednesdays. Our kids love this time so much they look forward to it all week and have their homework done before they get home so we can start family night earlier. We play lots of games and at the end we talk about our week, things we were happy about, things that upset us, things we could improve on etc. All the kids' input are encouraged and we end it with a song and prayer. The kids apparently talk about it at school and some teachers comment that it's a wonderful idea and they will start doing it also. Even my friends introduce it to their families' week. Games we play include cards, volleyball, baseball, who am I, I spy etc.

Tukia

**Parties, Praying, and Grandparents** -- Here are some of the family traditions my family pursues:

1. Attending birthday parties is a common practice especially with my eleven year old girl. She is always invited by her friends to attend their birthdays. In the same spirit we also organize her birthday part once a year and invite her friends. This social practice has helped her and we as a family to build solidarity among four families.

2. Praying is another regular family practice that we engage ourselves in daily. My family is composed of four people. Mummy, Daddy, Patricia-11years and Jotham-8months. Every morning and evening normally during holidays we recite prayers. This has helped us and more so our

child Patricia be more focused on offering assistance to family members and to our neighbors.

3. Visiting grandparents from my side is a common practice by my family. We normally visit them at the end of each month. The day before the visit, either me or mummy goes with Patricia to shop some items for them. This is done during the holidays when Patricia is home. However, the practice continues even when Patricia is at school. We enjoy it because grandparents prepare eats that we take along consuming in town. The tender attendance, love and advice has help us to be more responsible and respectful each other

Jude

**Potty Training Tradition** -- My brother has a tradition for potty-training each of his children! This system was so successful that he even wrote a book about it called "How To Potty Train Your Child in Five Hours Using the H.E.A.R.T. Method." Their children loved this since they got five hours all to themselves – it was party time! And their parents loved it because their child was potty trained after the five hours were done! You can find more information here:

[Potty Train Your Child In Five Hours](#)

**Waving, Praying, Eating, and Dancing** -- One of our traditions is every time another one of my siblings comes to visit and is leaving, all of us go out to the curb and wave good bye. Another is everyday we all make dinner together. We all pray together in unison before we eat and we all clean the table, do the dishes and dance to music after.

Dusty Branham  
Woodville, Ohio

**Competing Games** -- Here are the ideas that came to my mind to apply with the family where I am baby-sitting their son, and also some which I used in my own family too.

Competing games that would create a nice enthusiastic atmosphere among the family members. For example: chess, cards, bowling, scoring basket ball games and so forth.

Here is an example of a game using play cards. The aim of the game is to increase awareness and concentration, learn to obey rules and learn fast responses. The idea of the game is that the players do some instructions asked to do upon seeing certain cards from the deck and the first one to finish his cards without making mistakes is the winner.. for example the picture of the king should make a salute movement when appeared...the picture of the queen should say fast as it appear the word " Madam," the ace should put the hand on it the last player to put his hand on it takes all the cards that make the other players with less cards have more chance to win by finishing their cards first.. The joker when seen the players shouts, "Joker." I remember that was one of the most interesting games we used to play as family where we had interesting times together filled with laughter.

Jasmine  
Kingdom of Bahrain

**Party Night And Family Hour** -- We have two traditions the kids love. The first one is party night. Every Friday we rent movies, have popcorn and just all cuddle on the couch. We all look forward to it all week. Our second tradition we just started. I was thinking one day about all the TV shows that are on. I know everyone has their favorite and will watch it every week faithfully. They will stop everything for that hour. So I thought isn't it sad we will do that for a TV show and not our kids!!

So, we have a family hour once a week. We drop everything and leave the dishes, phones and laundry. We go for walks, bike rides jump on trampoline, play a game, etc. The first week we started this, my daughter who is ten said to me when she got off the bus, "Mom it is family hour tonight!!" with such excitement. So we truly do need to spend just TIME with our kids.

Brenda and Garth Amy Sarah Cody and Thomas Patterson

## Send In Your Traditions

Do you have a tradition you would like to submit to the next edition of “Fun Family Traditions and Rituals”? Please submit your tradition at <http://www.FirstRateFamily.com/articles/submissions.htm>. Be sure to include your name and where you are from. We look forward to hearing from you!

Wendy Jensen