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"Ways to Say 'I Love You'"

Creative Ideas to Show Your Child You Care
On Valentine's Day and Any Day of the Year

By Kimberly Blaker

Are you looking for some fun, creative ways to tell your child 'I love you' this Valentine's Day? Find plenty of great ideas here to use 365 days a year.

EDIBLE IDEAS

A heart a day....

Buy a package of small heart shaped candies, and put one in your child's lunch box every day of the school year. Don't forget to stock up during after-Valentine's Day sales so you won't run out.

Heart shaped lunch

Use a large, heart shaped cookie cutter to make heart-shaped sandwiches, toast, and other treats. Not only will your kids love the shape, they'll appreciate you've eliminated the crust.

A cupful of love

Give your child a “World’s Greatest Son/Daughter” or “I Love You” cup, and then use it throughout the year when you serve hot cocoa or graham crackers and milk.

Do lunch

Plan a surprise lunch date, and pick up your child from school. Hit her favorite fast-food joint, go on a picnic, or have lunch together in the school cafeteria. (If you choose the latter, make sure your child won’t mind. Depending on your child’s age, this could be a social no-no.)

THE WRITTEN WORD**A poet and didn’t know-it**

You don’t have to be a poet to write a poem for your child. If poetry isn’t your thing, look up simple children’s rhymes, and make revisions that your child will enjoy. They can be serious or fun, but either way, your child will love it.

A valentine welcome

Welcome your child home from school with a valentine banner across your front porch or entryway. Include cute sayings that remind him why he’s the greatest son, create fun sentences by clipping words from magazine ads, and add some valentine doodles.

Snail mail surprise

Kids love to receive mail, so why not send your child a card, letter, or postcard? And don’t forget to have him check and sort the mail to discover the greeting himself.

Say it with email

Send your child an email with a link to a fun website or a funny animated e-greeting.

With tons of entertaining websites and many that offer free e-greetings, you can send your child something new every day of the year.

Scrabble greetings

Wish your child a “Happy Valentine’s Day,” congratulate him on a great report card, or show how much you appreciate his help with a scrabble message. For younger readers, spell out a simple phrase leaving a space between the words. For older kids, make them figure out your greeting. Intersect the words as you would in playing the game, and see if they can solve the message.

C is for....

Make a poster that portrays your child’s characteristics. Put her name at the top, and then list as many positive descriptive words as you can that begin with her initial. Use a thesaurus for oodles of words. (Example: Cassandra, cute, caring, creative, crafty, curious.) When you finish, laminate or frame it, and hang it in her room.

Poetry praise

Give your child a poetry book written just for sons and daughters. *To My Son with Love* or *To My Daughter with Love on the Important Things in Life*, written by Susan Polis Schultz, offer encouragement and a new understanding of your love and commitment. Don’t forget to include your inscription inside.

DO IT TOGETHER

Love is silly

One thing kids love and do best is act silly, so loosen up and join in the fun. If being silly isn't your style, take a few lessons from your child, and practice up. Letting loose is a great way to de-stress and to let your child know he's fun to be around.

A gift of time

For today's busy parents, finding time to read to or play with your child isn't always easy. Fortunately, the quality, rather than the quantity, of time is what matters most. Show your child you care by setting aside a few minutes each day to talk, read, or play together, and you'll both reap the rewards.

A class connection

As kids grow, time together becomes increasingly rare. Decide with your adolescent on an activity or hobby that the two of you would enjoy together. Then sign up for a class or set a regular schedule for the activity, and mark it on your calendar. Treat it just as you would any other commitment, and don't let daily life interfere.

A trip down memory lane

Flip through photo albums or watch family videos together, and reminisce about the great holidays, vacations, and family times you've had.

Eventful gifts

Buy tickets to a concert, ice show, or sporting event that your kids have been dying to see, but don't tell them about it. On the day of the event, say that you're going out to dinner or some other concoction, and then catch them by surprise when you arrive at your true destination.

Make a date

Plan a regular date with your child for some one-on-one time. This works especially well for families with more than one child. Each parent should take a turn with each child, then go out for lunch or supper, play putt-putt golf, take in a movie, go roller-skating, or spend the afternoon at the park. Set a regular schedule so your child can look forward to your dates together.

GIFTS FROM THE HEART**Flowers for her**

Cut fresh flowers for your daughter, and liven her room.

Race cars for him

Clip sports cars from magazines for your son, and post them on a bulletin board in his room.

Engrave your thoughts

Engrave a necklace or bracelet for your child, and include his name, your sentiments, and who it's from.

Van Gogh in the making

Sift through your child's art collection, and select a piece to display. Then mat, frame, and hang it in a room, other than your child's, for everyone to see.

Photos say a thousand words

Choose several photos of your child from infancy through the present, then use paper-edgers, and trim them into different sizes and shapes. Overlap and tape them to the backing of a frame using double-sided tape, then add matting, and frame the collage.

It’s in the wrapping

Don’t wait for a special occasion to give your child a gift. Kids love presents, so the next time you pick up something for your child, wrap it as a surprise. Don’t forget the ribbon (so it takes longer to unwrap), and include a small gift card that says how much you appreciate her.

Scrapbookin’ fun

Put together a memory scrapbook of your child. Use photos, locks of hair, vacation postcards, and ticket stubs. Dedicate each page to a special holiday, event, or theme. Include dates and any details you remember, along with cute sayings and stickers to fit the themes.

The End

SIDEBARS OR WAYS TO LOCALIZE: A list of specialty stores that carry some of the items above such as scrapbook materials or the above mentioned poetry books.

Kimberly Blaker of Michigan is an author and mother of two. She writes for parenting and women's magazines throughout the United States and in Canada.

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