

TWENTY LONG DISTANCE ACTIVITIES FOR DADS AT A DISTANCE

The *Dads at a Distance* Web site has been designed to help fathers who are business travelers, military men, non-custodial fathers, airline pilots, travel guides, traveling salesmen, railroad workers, truckers, professional athletes, musicians/entertainers, actors, corporate executives, and any other fathers who have to be away from their children to maintain and strengthen the relationships they have with their children while they are away.

1. Go to the mall and have a photo of yourself put on a pillow case and then send it to your child. If you have favorite cologne, you might want to put a little bit on the pillowcase to remind your child of you.
2. Purchase or make stickers of your child's name and stick them over the names of a character in one of their favorite books. You also can get a picture of your child's face and place it over the character's face.
3. Make a video or audiotape of you reading bedtime stories. Send them to your child along with the book.
4. Arrange for flowers or pizza to be delivered to your child before or after a special event (e.g. a play, recital, or sports game). Include a note telling them how proud you are of their accomplishment.
5. Send a package containing all the things your child will need if he or she gets sick. For example, you could send a can of chicken noodle soup, a special blanket or pillowcase, a video or audiotape wishing them a speedy recovery, crossword puzzles, or a stuffed animal.
6. Send home a photo documentary of what you do all day when you are away. Be sure to include things like what you eat and how you travel. Things that you might think are boring, your kids will be very interested in seeing. Have your child do the same.
7. Have a star officially named after your child.
8. Send a postcard attack. (Send a postcard everyday for a week straight; try to send postcards from unique places.)
9. If both you and your child have access to cell phones, then go fishing with them from a distance.
10. Include surprises within your letters: fast food wrappers, foreign currency, pencil shavings, coasters, Band-Aids, your own art, flower petals, Sunday comics, sand, fortunes from cookies, newspaper clippings, stamps, or old shoe laces.
11. If both you and your child have access to the Internet, then go on a virtual field trip together.

Be sure to use a chat program so you can communicate with each other while looking at the Web sites. A couple of places to start would be NASA's Web site at <http://www.nasa.gov> or the PBS Web site at <http://www.pbs.org>.

12. Find unique things to write your letters on, for example, things your child likes—a favorite color of paper, stickers, or pictures of things they like; fun objects—coaster, napkins, paper tray liners at restaurants, air sickness bags, old handkerchiefs, or pictures of you or of favorite spots; paper cut into special shapes (holiday shapes like shamrocks or hearts); or puzzles (cut your finished letter into pieces; try sending one piece at a time).
13. Send home some money so that your child can go to the ice cream parlor. Be sure to send a special letter along that can only be read at the ice cream parlor. If you both have access to cell phones, then you can both be at a ice cream parlor talking over your ice cream.

14. Write a newsletter (have a regular issue of your own family newsletter with columns about each child, family events, and exciting news).
15. If your child does not already have access to a speakerphone, then buy one. Set the phone in the middle of the room, and you will be able to have dinner with them, be there as they brush their teeth, and get ready for bed.
16. Start a letter and take it with you throughout the day. Add a sentence every now and then and be sure to add where you are when you write the different sentences (i.e., an elevator, taxi, or café).
17. Play Internet games together like Jeopardy or Wheel of Fortune. Other games that can be found on the Internet include golf, card games, chess, checkers, and strategy games.
18. Make a package that contains cookie cutters and the non-perishable ingredients of your child's favorite cookie so you can "help" them bake while you are away.
19. Choose a photo from your photo album that you can send to your child and then write a letter explaining the events surrounding it. Also, if both you and your child have access to the Internet, have a family home page.
20. Begin a life's lessons booklet. Each week write down a few of the lessons you have learned in life and how you learned those lessons. When the booklet is full, send it to your child to use as he or she begins or continues the journey of life. Before you leave home next time, hide some treasure (notes of appreciation, videos of you reading stories, candy, or toys) around the house. Be sure to draw a treasure map of where you have hidden these things, and then mail it home. If your child has a portable phone, then you can talk to them and give hints as they hunt for the treasure. If you are not living with your child, you can still do this activity by mailing the treasures ahead of time to the person who is taking care of your child. More activities and resources for long distance dads and their families can be found at *Dads at a Distance* Web site at **<http://www.daads.com>**.

Adapted by K. Thompson Fatherhood Program Specialist The National Long Distance Relationship Building Institute. (2001). *20 long distance activities for dads at a distance* [On-line] Available: www.daads.com/fathering.html .