



FACTSHEET

Resources for families

Making time for your kids

Change the shape of your week

Sometimes small changes can make a big difference to the amount of time you can spend with your children. Leaving for work half an hour earlier or later might enable you to make a routine of sharing breakfast, or doing bathtimes. Even if you can only manage it once or twice a week, it'll be really worthwhile.

If you're lucky, your employer will be happy for you to mould your work hours around being a dad, so long as the job gets done. If not, see if there's a way of boxing clever to achieve your goal; if necessary, trade two hours for one – that way you show you're a committed dad and the exact opposite of a slacker.

To find out more about flexible working, and your right to request it from your employer, check out the [Government's website](#).

Don't obsess about 'quality time'

Quality time is a bit of a myth – you can't engineer special moments with your children, so you need to spend a good quantity of time with them in order for the 'quality' interactions to occur naturally. Equally, just being in the same place as them for hours on end is no good. Involved fathers know how to engage with their children mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually – because they've spent enough time with them, and taken enough responsibility for their upbringing, to know them inside out.

Eat together, stay together

Most parenting experts agree that eating meals together regularly is key to a happy, harmonious family life. So even if you can't manage it every night, do try to eat one or two evening meals per week together. And even if you don't manage to force-feed them with vegetables every time, do try to eat at a table rather than in front of the TV. These days, shared meals may be the only times you all get to sit down together, laugh and share stories - they can be great fun and are vital to keeping everyone in touch and feeling a sense of belonging.

Make the most of 'car time'

It's easy to dismiss the time you spend driving your kids around as 'lost time'. In fact, a lot of great parenting can happen while spending time together in cars. It's a neutral space for conversation, games like I-spy, listening to music together and watching the world go by. DVD players in the back seat can be great to keep little ones entertained if you're heading off on a hugely long journey – but for shorter trips go old-school with in-depth chats, jokes, I-spy, 20 questions and 'count the different coloured cars'. When they're older, listen to books together, play 'just a minute', take turns to play each other some favourite songs...or set up some deep philosophical discussions.

Use technology to your advantage

As a modern parent you'll spend plenty of time railing against your children's excessive use of hand-held devices - but they do have their advantages. If you know you're not going to be able to see them in person, organise a video call via FaceTime or Skype – it keeps you in touch and shows them you're thinking about them, even when you're at work. Regular texts or emails, just to say 'I love you' or share a silly joke, also keep the communication flowing.

Treat special events as non-negotiable

Don't be the dad that missed his children's birthdays, parent's evenings and school plays. Book the time off as early as you can – and if your child's school doesn't give you enough notice, do something about it and have a word with the head teacher. You won't be the only working parent who finds it tough to make it last minute.

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