



Child Care Resources Inc.

## tip sheet

Ideas and information about child development and early education for parents, professionals and the community-at-large.

# #532

### Main Office

4601 Park Road, Suite 500  
Charlotte, NC 28209  
Main line (704) 376-6697  
Fax line (704) 376-7865

### Cabarrus County Office

2353 Concord Lake Road, Suite 160  
Concord, NC 28025  
Training/Main (704) 786-1023  
Fax line (704) 786-1034

### Union County Office

105-A Cedar Street  
Monroe, NC 28110  
Training/Main (704) 238-8810  
Fax line (704) 238-8811

**Website:** [www.childcareresourcesinc.org](http://www.childcareresourcesinc.org)

**Email:** [mailbox@childcareresourcesinc.org](mailto:mailbox@childcareresourcesinc.org)

Access this and other tip sheets through the CCRI FaxBack Line: **(704) 335-9421**

## child care search

Resource & referral service

Mecklenburg County ..... (704) 348-2181  
Cabarrus County ..... (704) 786-1024  
Union County ..... (704) 238-8800

# Grandparents + Children = Love

When a child is born, several important relationships are created—including the relationship between grandparent and child. Like all relationships, the actual nature of the grandparent/grandchild relationship is ever-changing from that moment on.

For the more than 1.3 million children living in grandparent-headed households with no parent present, that relationship is more like a parent/child relationship. For many families—whether by family circumstances or family living choices—grandparents and grandchildren live in the same home and have daily opportunities to interact. Other families experience many miles (even continents) of separation allowing only infrequent visits between grandparents and grandchildren. But even physical distance can be overcome by frequent communication—by letter, telephone, or e-mail.

We know from research the critical impact one caring adult can have to the survival of a child considered vulnerable or at-risk. We know—and can learn much more—about the power and potential of the grandparents' relationship for any child by listening to and observing the many loving interactions between children and grandparents around us.

### *What children say about grand-parents*

- a grandmother always thinks you are going to get hurt.
- a grandfather is a very old man; long, long ago he was something like me.
- a grandmother is seriously concerned over germs, but will come to your soccer game and cheer when she doesn't know what is going on.
- grandparents have time to listen; invite you over to sleep; and tell stories about your family.
- a grandpa comes to school to read and be a friend to my friends.

Over the ages, grandparents seem to be frequently described in terms of what they do for or bring to a young child or the family: mends clothes, makes wonderful stew or cookies not-from-a-box, gets mud out of sneakers, keeps candy in a pocket, walks just to go walking, takes everyone to church to sing, digs worms in the garden, always stops cleaning house to play, goes to the store with you even if she doesn't need anything, makes a party even when it's no one's birthday, sits with you while you do homework as the "eraser lady", reads stories with his eyes closed, goes fishing just to watch you, takes you to the doctor even when you cry, lets you play in



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puddles, plays games he can't win, holds your hand at just the right times, and reminds parents that they were once little children.

Grandparents of the twenty-first century will very likely do many of these same things. And, they also may be engaging in new activities with their grandchildren: making microwave meals, going to children's museums, exchanging e-mails, writing and illustrating stories on a computer, even building family Web sites.

Whatever the activity, the characteristics that grandparents bring to these loving relationships include:

- caring and “being there” over time
- consistency in the message and the manner
- looking for and finding the good in each child
- making and taking time
- nonjudgmental listening
- keeping the stories alive
- seeing life through the eyes of a child
- loving as only a grandparent can love a grandchild.



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Updated 2/19/99*