



Early Head Start Gazette

Alternate Gift Ideas for Valentines

A Letter of Appreciation. The best gift of all is always a simple letter to your loved ones detailing how grateful you are to have them in your life. Be as specific as possible; "the way you let me sleep in the morning while you make the kids breakfast" and "the way you sing off key" are even more satisfying than "You're lovable," because the recipient feels seen and appreciated. Don't worry if it isn't eloquent. Any heartfelt love letter will be cherished by the recipient much more than a store-bought gift. This isn't only for your partner; kids feel loved when we notice who they are and what they contribute to us, our family, and the world. Your kids will reread your letters during tough times.

They'll save them for the rest of their lives.
Homemade Valentines. Kids feel loved when we spend time making something for them, rather than buying it. Why not make Valentines? This can be as simple as 15 minutes with red construction paper, scissors, and magic markers, or as elaborate as a joyful, creative family project for three hours. Need inspiration? There are web sites galore. But I usually stick to the simplest: construction paper hearts with a heartfelt message detailing something you appreciate about the recipient.
A gift certificate for a



backrub or foot massage every night for a month. Kids feel loved when we listen to them and give them an opportunity to talk through their daily challenges. Every single day, spend 15 minutes snuggling with each child before bed. Not reading, that's separate. Snuggle time is just chatting, or snuggling companionably. Most kids love a backrub and hand or foot rub. Darkness and impending lights out helps you connect soul to soul. After the month, you'll realize the gift was really to you, and you won't be willing to give up your new habit. <http://www.ahaparenting.com/>

Inside this issue:

Don't let Babies Sleep in car Seats	2
Learn About Food Additives	2
Fun Banana Boat Dessert	2
Energizing my Finances	3
How to Encourage Your Baby to Giggle	4
Valentine Craft for Toddlers	4

Valentine's Day Facts

1. Instead of sending cards to everyone, in the Middle Ages, young people drew names from a bowl. They pinned the other person's name to their sleeve for one week to show everyone who their Valentine was. Imagine, an entire week with one Valentine -- who you may or may not even have a crush on!
2. The biggest Valentine ever given was the **Taj Mahal** in India. Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan built it as a memorial to his wife.
3. Doctors in the 1880s prescribed chocolate to patients to help soothe their broken

4. Teachers receive the most Valentine's Day cards each year -- but come on, they have an unfair advantage!
5. Cupid is a symbol of Valentine's Day because he was the son of Venus, the Roman goddess of love and beauty. Those cute little arrows he holds were actually magical arrows, believed to make those he shot fall in love. http://thestir.cafemom.com/big_kid/116275/history_of_valentines_day_for



Children (as well as adults) sometimes think that people will stop loving them if they make mistakes or do things they shouldn't do. Parents and caregivers reassure children of their love when they acknowledge that everyone makes mistakes sometimes, and that even when we get angry with people, we can still love them. In fact, it's the people we love the most who often make us feel maddest.

-- Fred Rogers
<http://www.pbs.org/parents/rogers/theme/1661.html>

Parents Whose Baby Died Warn: Don't Let Babies Sleep in Car Seats

The Short of It

After their 11-week-old son died, devastated Oklahoma parents are urging parents, caregivers, and lawmakers to understand the dangers of infants sleeping in car seats and carriers.

The Lowdown

Baby Shepard died after being put to sleep in an unbuckled car seat at a day care and was left unsupervised. The position of his head compromised his airway, causing him to stop breathing. Ali Dodd says she received a phone call no mother should ever have to take, telling her that her son had passed away.

Now, the Dodds want lawmakers to issue guidelines on safe sleep practices for car seats, because currently, there are no specific rules when it comes to car seats or carriers. And caregivers may not know why it's unsafe for a baby to sleep in a seat, only that they're supposed to place baby in

a crib or bassinet for sleep.

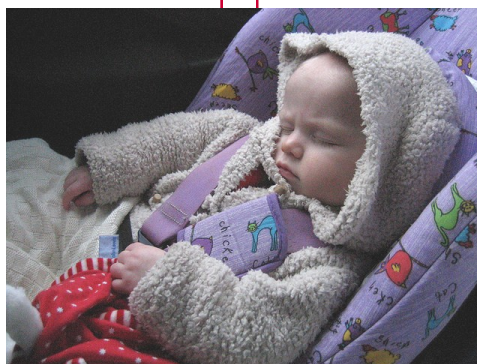
"Unfortunately, that's the good that's going to come out of my son's death, is sitting in carrying devices are not safe for sleep," mom Ali Dodd said.

The Upshot

What happened to the Dodd family could happen to anyone. Who hasn't allowed their infant to doze off in a car seat carrier placed on the floor after running errands or while cooking dinner? But Shepard's death highlights how unsafe this habit is and that more needs to be done to educate parents and caregivers about the danger of this common practice.

Here's what you need to know:

An infant should always be placed on



his back to sleep, on a firm mattress in a crib or bassinet, and nowhere else.

When using a car seat or carrier, babies must always be supervised or else they can change positions and block

their tiny airways. A good rule of thumb for parents to follow is to never, under any circumstances, use a car seat for anything other than its intended purpose, which is to keep baby safe in the car.

Never allow a baby, asleep or awake, to remain in a seat when the straps are loosened or unbuckled, so he can't maneuver into a position that compromises his breathing.

<http://www.parenting.com/news-break/parents-whose-baby-died/>

Chemical Cuisine: Learn about Food Additives

Deciding what foods to buy was simpler when most food came from farms. Now, factory-made foods have made chemical additives a significant part of our diet. In general, it's best to avoid the following ingredients.

Aspartame, Acesulfame-K, Saccharin

Food dyes

Mycoprotein (Quorn-brand meat substitutes)

Partially hydrogenated oils (trans fat)

And don't forget to cut back on sugar and salt, which cause more harm than all the other additives combined. <https://www.cspinet.org/reports/>

Fun Banana Boat Dessert

Kids can help: Fill their own banana boats with fruit.

Ingredients:

- Bananas
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Whipped Cream



Holding the banana curving upwards, remove the top 1/4 layer, using a sharp knife.

With a small melon scooper, make a shallow, elongated groove to hold the other

fruits.

Spritz the banana with orange juice or lemon juice to prevent discoloration.

Fill banana boat with assorted fruits as shown. Garnish with a dollop of whipped cream. <http://www.parenting.com/article/fun-banana-boat-dessert>

Energizing My Finances: Life Happens

On December 18, 2015, we followed up with the second half of our Energizing My Finances parent training. During the first half of our training, we discussed setting financial goals and steps to creating a financial vision board. After setting financial goals, it is very important to keep track of how you are spending your money. This way, you know how you are doing when it comes to completing one of your goals. During the second half of our Energizing My Finances parent training, we played a game, Life Happens, and created budgets. The game encouraged parents to financially prepare for different situations that may occur in their daily lives, including cars breaking down and receiving unexpected checks in the mail.

When creating your budget, remember to include:

- Your income
- Your savings
- Your expenses

"Life Happens"

This lesson was adapted for Teaching Tolerance from Life Happens, a game created by Tracy Ore, Assistant Professor at Saint Cloud State University, Department of Human Relations and Multicultural Education.

Materials

Printed copy of the family profiles (PDF) (one profile is provided for each small group of four-to-six students)

Printed copies of budget costs (PDF) (one for each small group)

Printed "Life Happens" sheets (PDF), cut into cards and placed in a basket

Directions

During the first 20-30 minutes, each group should construct a monthly budget for its family (the family profile should be given), using the budget cost sheets. Ask each group to reflect on the difficulty or ease of creating the budget.

During the next 30 minutes, ask each group to draw a "Life Happens" card from the basket. Small groups should then rearrange their budgets, making difficult decisions, as necessary. Ask each group to reflect on the difficulty or ease of creating the revised budget.

Household Finances

Expense (Monthly)	Amount	Due Date
HOME		
Mortgage/Rent	\$	
Second Mortgage	\$	
Taxes & Insurance	\$	
Repairs	\$	
Association Fees	\$	
UTILITIES		
Electric	\$	
Gas or Oil	\$	
Water & Sewer	\$	
Phone (Landline)	\$	
Phone (Cellular)	\$	
Cable/Satellite	\$	
Internet	\$	
TRANSPORTATION		
Car Payment 1	\$	
Car Payment 2	\$	
Gas	\$	
Car Insurance	\$	
Repairs/Maintenance	\$	
Other Transportation (tolls, taxis, parking, subway, bus)	\$	
INSURANCE		
Life Insurance	\$	
Disability	\$	
Health Insurance	\$	
DEBT PAYMENTS (Minimums only)		
Credit Card 1	\$	
Credit Card 2	\$	
Credit Card 3	\$	
Student Loans	\$	
Other Loans	\$	
SUBTOTAL:	\$	

Build-a-Budget Worksheet

Household Finances

Expense (Monthly)	Amount	Due Date
SUBTOTAL, pg. 1	\$	
FOOD		
Groceries	\$	
Eating Out	\$	
FAMILY EXPENSES		
Day Care	\$	
Child Support	\$	
Alimony	\$	
School Tuition/Fees	\$	
PERSONAL CARE		
Hair Cuts	\$	
Prescription Medication	\$	
Toiletries/Makeup	\$	
Clothing	\$	
PETS		
Food	\$	
Care (vet, grooming, etc.)	\$	
ENTERTAINMENT		
Books & Magazines	\$	
Movies/Concerts	\$	
Music	\$	
Hobbies	\$	
Other	\$	
OTHER		
Cleaning Supplies	\$	
Tithes/Donations	\$	
Other	\$	
Other	\$	
TOTAL:	\$	

Build-a-Budget Worksheet, cont'd.

How to encourage your baby to giggle, plus best ways to capture the moment

There are few sweeter sounds than hearing a baby laugh, especially when they laugh for the first time. It's a contagious sound. When you're out in public and your infant starts to giggle, just look around and you'll see how baby's laughter inspires smiles and chuckles from onlookers.

At what age do babies start laughing?

"On average, babies start to laugh at about four months of age," says pediatrician and author of *Heading Home with Your Newborn*, Dr. Jennifer Shu. "Although it could be earlier or later by a month or two," she adds.

Stephanie Keses, a first-time mom in Montreal, says that her baby, now five months old, was an early giggler. Her son Jake started laughing at about two months of age, and nowadays, he's laughing up a storm. "He laughs when you say 'I love you,' and 'mama'," says Keses.

Different babies, different laughing triggers

Keep in mind that, just like an adult, every baby has an individual sense of humour, even though they are still tiny. So where baby Jake might giggle at sweet words, another baby might only laugh at a silly face or another trigger, such as a toy.

My son, now 18 months old, would only laugh hysterically for me at four months old when I tossed a sock mon-

key in the air. My husband had better luck coaxing a stream of giggles out of him using nonsense words. No laughing matters. Some babies don't laugh at all, which can be normal, too. "If everything else is developing on target, parents don't need to worry," assures Shu, who is also a mom.

It's also possible you haven't yet noticed when they are cracking up.

"Babies often start smiling and laughing in their sleep, catching parents a bit off guard," says Shu.

Fits of the giggles

Coming down with a bad case of the giggles is a common daytime phenomenon among infants. "Once something sets them off, they may laugh over and over again," Shu says. "If you make a face or noise they think is funny, they'll laugh repeatedly when you do it several times - easy entertainment!" she says.

Capturing baby laughs on video

When a baby laughter spell is coming on, you'll want to record it on video.

One of the best pieces of prenatal advice I received was from a friend who said, "Take lots of video. Otherwise, you'll forget what the baby was



like."

It's true, as a baby quickly becomes a toddler, her voice and laugh will change, so capture that delightful soft infant gurgle while you can. To get the best video re-

sults, be sure to get

down at the baby's level, turn on the lights in the room, and keep the shot steady, without trying any tricks like zooming in or out.

Other tips to get a laugh from a baby:

- Make a fish face or stick your tongue out
- Play peekaboo, using a blanket to cover your head
- Imitate animals (or cartoon characters, or relatives)
- Copy a sound that the baby makes
- Use a hand puppet
- Put a soft toy on top of your head, or toss and catch it in the air (away from the baby)
- Use tickles, sparingly (they can be irritating)

And of course, don't forget to giggle, too. "Laugh with your baby. It will help her develop her social communication skills - and you'll be happier too," says

Shu. http://www.canadianliving.com/moms/babies/your_laughing_baby_how_to_encourage_your_baby_to_giggle_plus_learn_the_best_ways_to_capture_the_moment.php

Valentine Crafts for Toddlers



Valentine Heart Stamps

Work with what you've got! Paint and an empty roll of toilet paper are all you need for some stampin' valentine fun with your lil one. [http://](http://www.popsugar.com/moms/Valentine-Day-Crafts-Toddlers-21553278#photo-21553372)

www.popsugar.com/moms/Valentine-Day-Crafts-Toddlers-21553278#photo-21553372

Footprint Valentine Keepsake

Little feet can be so sweet! Even if your little one is too small to actively participate in making a valentine card, they can still help mama make a special Valentine's Day memory. Create a keepsake valentine by imprinting your baby's feet into a heart! [http://www.popsugar.com/](http://www.popsugar.com/moms/Valentine-Day-Crafts-Toddlers-21553278#photo-21553373)

[moms/Valentine-Day-Crafts-Toddlers-21553278#photo-21553373](http://www.popsugar.com/moms/Valentine-Day-Crafts-Toddlers-21553278#photo-21553373)

