

The Family Life List

Free Starter Edition | US

31 small things you'll be glad you did together
+ 3 seven-day challenges

Small things first, big dreams later.
Do it together. No regrets.

Before you start

When people look back on a life, what they remember most is rarely how far they traveled. It's "that day we did something together."

Everything on this list is **doable for an ordinary family**. Most of it is free or close to free. No fancy photos, no passport needed. Pick one and start this weekend.

Whoever is in your family, everyone can join in. Kids, teens, parents, grandparents: cooking together, telling a story from childhood, teaching a word in a family language. Showing up is how a family knows it cares.

How to read this list

- **Cost:** \$ free or nearly free | \$\$ a little (about one meal out)
- **Comfort zone:** ★1 easy → ★5 big stretch
- **Screens:** every quest is a real, offline experience. Our rule: No screens under age 2, and for kids 2+, 1 hour or less of screen time a day in total, in line with AAP and WHO guidance for young children [1][2]. Adults handle any photos or recordings.
- **Privacy:** photos and recordings stay within the family by default. Always ask before recording anyone's voice.
- **No rankings:** every quest and every day counts. Taking a break is fine.

By age

Ages 0–2: a gentle start (adults do it with baby)

1 Grandparents’ lullaby

2–4 people | any time | \$ | ★1

A grandparent’s voice can be one of a child’s earliest memories. An adult records it; baby doesn’t need to watch a screen.

 Lullaby Keeper

2 A letter to open at 18

1–6 people (parents and grandparents each write a part) | birthday or New Year | \$ | ★2

“I wish I’d had the courage to express my feelings” is one of the most common regrets heard in hospice care [3]. Write it down now.

 Time Messenger

Ages 3–5: learning with their hands

3 Seed to supper

2–4 people | plant in spring | \$ | ★2

Waiting, tending, caring for something alive. Kids remember who they grew it with.

 Little Farmer

4 Thank-you cards for our helpers

2–4 people | any time | \$ | ★2

Noticing what others do for us, and saying thank you out loud.

 Thank-You Messenger

5 Junior Ranger Trainee at a national park

2–6 people | spring–fall | \$ (booklet free; park entry may cost extra) | ★2

Some parks have programs for ages 3–4. At Mount Rushmore, the Junior Ranger Trainee booklet is free and kids earn a badge [7].

 Little Ranger

6 Draw “the best part of today” at bedtime

child + parent | every night | \$ (paper and crayons) | ★1

Paper only. Child draws one, parent draws one, then swap and tell each other. Seven drawings earn the badge, and missed nights are fine.

 Happy Artist

Ages 6–9: little explorers

7 Family reporter: interview Grandma and Grandpa

2–4 people | holiday gatherings | \$ | ★2

Research found that kids who know more of their family’s stories have a clearer sense of who they are [4][5]. Try: “What was the hardest thing you faced as a kid?”

 Family Reporter

8 Learn one phrase a week in a grandparent's language (or a family saying)

2–3 people (in person, or by a regular voice message) | any time | \$ | ★2

Grandparents become teachers and feel needed. Kids learn the life lessons behind the words.

 Language Keeper

9 A one-line family diary (on paper)

whole family | every night | \$ | ★1

A notebook on the dinner table. Everyone writes one line a day, or take turns. In a few years, it's your family's story.

 Family Diarist

10 Fourth-grade park year

whole family | Sept 1–Aug 31 | \$ | ★2

With Every Kid Outdoors, US 4th graders and their families get free access to 2,000+ federal lands and waters for the school year [8]. Pair it with Junior Ranger booklets, many aimed at ages 5–14 [9]. Check the rules for what the pass covers.

 Young Ranger

Ages 10–12: starting to lead

11 Kid plans the day trip

whole family | any time | \$–\$\$ | ★3

Budget, route, timing: the kid decides. When adults follow for a day, kids feel trusted.

 Trip Captain

12 Apprentice with a grandparent

one older, one younger | any time | \$ | ★2

Fixing things, cooking, knitting, fishing. Once the skill is learned, a piece of that grandparent stays with the child.

 Apprentice

Ages 13–17: stepping out

13 Record a grandparent's life story with StoryCorps

2 people | around Thanksgiving (The Great Thanksgiving Listen) | \$ (free tools) | ★3

The StoryCorps App (in person) and StoryCorps Connect (remote) are both free. Ages 13+; under 18 needs a parent's consent to register. You can keep it private or share it [10][11].

 Oral Historian

14 Write a thank-you letter and read it to them in person

2 people | any time | \$ | ★4

Not expressing feelings is a common life regret [3]. Practice while you're young.

 Brave Words

Ages 18–29: becoming a grown-up in the family

15 Learn Mom's signature dish, exactly right

2 people | any time | \$ | ★2

The taste of home is what people miss most after leaving it.

 Flavor Heir

16 Ask your parents: “What was your dream when you were young?”

2–3 people | a walk or a dinner | \$ | ★3

Research found people’s most lasting regrets are about not becoming their “ideal self” [6]. Maybe there’s still time to do a little of it together.

 Dream Talk

17 Reconnect with a long-lost friend

1–2 people | any time | \$ | ★3

“I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends” is a regret often heard in hospice care [3].

 Old Friends

Ages 30–49: the parent years

18 A birthday letter to your child, every year

parents (grandparents welcome) | each birthday | \$ | ★1

Write what made you proud this year and one thing you hope they remember. At 18, they get a whole stack of love.

 Annual Letter

19 Start a tradition that’s only ours

whole family | one fixed day a year | \$ | ★1

What happens every year becomes what “home” feels like to a child.

 Tradition Maker

20 A screen-free family weekend

whole family | any weekend | \$ | ★4 (hardest for parents)

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends screen-free family meals, bedtimes, and playtime, for adults too [1].

 Unplugged

Ages 50+: passing it on

21 Label old family photos with names and years

2-4 people | holidays | \$ | ★2

Without names on the back, one generation later no one will know who's in the picture.

 Photo Keeper

22 Tell your life story for the grandkids to record

2-3 people | any time | \$ | ★2

A family member records on their own phone, after asking first. Being willing to tell it is the gift.

 Family Voice

Who you do it with

The same idea feels different with different people.

23 Sort old toys and clothes together and donate them

Parent + child \$ | ★2

 Sharing Hands

24 Cook a family recipe: one family member teaches their signature dish, kids take photos and write down the steps and the story

Whole family \$ | ★2

 Family Cookbook

25 Grandkids send a “go Grandpa!” or “thank you” voice message (an adult helps with the phone)

Three generations \$ | ★1

 Cheer Station

26 A 20-minute walk together: no talk about kids or work

Couples \$ | ★2

 Just Us Two

27 Swap letters: “3 things I’m most grateful for about you”

Couples \$ | ★3

 Gratitude Letter

28 Monthly rotating potluck: everyone brings one dish

Friends \$ | ★2



Potluck Crew

29 Look through childhood photos; each shares the moment they remember most

Siblings \$ | ★2



Childhood Puzzle

30 A monthly “just us” phone call

Siblings \$ | ★1



Sibling Hotline

31 Write a thank-you letter to a former teacher (sending it is optional)

Solo \$ | ★3



Thank-You Teacher

7-day challenges

One small action a day, just check the box. **Every day you do counts.** Missed one? Just pick it up the next day.

7 Days of Thank You

anyone

Each day, give one family member or friend a **specific** thank-you.

For example: “Thanks for doing the dishes tonight.” “Thanks for waiting for me to eat.” The more specific, the more it lands.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
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 Thank-You Champ

7 Phone-Free Dinners

whole family

At dinner, all phones go in another room, adults’ too.

Take turns asking: “What was the best part of your day?”

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
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 Table Time

7 Bedtime Questions

parent + child, couples

Before sleep, ask one question and really listen.

Ideas: "What made you laugh today?" "Who was kind to you?" "What do you want to try tomorrow?"

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

Day 7



Bedtime Three

Our first 3 quests

Print it or write right on this page, then stick it on the fridge.

The quest	With whom	When

Sources

1. American Academy of Pediatrics, Media and Young Minds: <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/138/5/e20162591/60354>
2. World Health Organization, To grow up healthy, children need to sit less and play more (2019): <https://www.who.int/news/item/24-04-2019-to-grow-up-healthy-children-need-to-sit-less-and-play-more>
3. Bronnie Ware, Regrets of the Dying: <https://bronnieware.com/regrets-of-the-dying/>
4. Emory University, Family Narratives Project: <https://www.emory.edu/news/Releases/familymeals1129128206.html>
5. Fivush, Duke & Bohanek, The power of family history in adolescent identity and well-being: <https://ncph.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/The-power-of-family-history-in-adolescent-identity.pdf>
6. Davidai & Gilovich (2018), The ideal road not taken: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28493750/>
7. NPS, Mount Rushmore Junior Ranger: <https://www.nps.gov/moru/learn/kidsyouth/junior-ranger.htm>
8. NPS, Every Kid Outdoors: <https://www.nps.gov/kids/every-kid-outdoors.htm> ; rules: <https://nps.gov/everykidoutdoors/rules.htm>
9. NPS, National Junior Ranger booklets: <https://www.nps.gov/portals/kids/junior-rangers.htm>
10. StoryCorps, The Great Thanksgiving Listen: <https://storycorps.org/discover/the-great-thanksgiving-listen/>
11. StoryCorps App help: <https://support.storycorps.org/help-center/how-do-i-record-an-interview-with-the-storycorps-app>

This list offers everyday ideas only, not medical, legal, or financial advice. Seasons and cost levels are general estimates.

Want the full version and early access to the app?

Join the waitlist

The full version has more quests for every age, a three-generation list, “Pick a Country” culture challenges, and guides for family letters and grown-ups’ legacy letters.

The app is still in the works. Join the waitlist and we’ll let you know when early access opens.

tally.so/r/BE4J8Q

This free edition will always be free.

Pick one small thing and start this weekend.