

JEWISH GRANDPARENTS NETWORK

Grandparenting from Afar: Connecting with Your Grandchildren When You Live at a Distance



Are you seeking playful ways to connect with your grandchild who lives far away? Does your four-year-old grandchild resist getting on Zoom or FaceTime?

Many grandparents tell us they need ideas to connect with grandkids at a distance. From our own research, the Jewish Grandparents Network learned that over half of grandparents live up to five or more hours away from their grandkids.

You're not alone!

Whether it's new to you or you've lived at a distance for a long time, this resource will help you find ways to reinspire your relationship with your grandkids, no matter how far away you are.



I only get to see my grandchild over video chat. How can I get more time with them?

Children's librarian Dr. Betsy Diamant-Cohen recommends having a scheduled time for a regular call. Some grandparents arrange a call every day — or on certain days — at breakfast or dinner. Some families like to connect on Sunday mornings. A regularly scheduled call lets your grandchildren and their parents plan ahead and anticipate your call.

If connecting in real time is challenging, there are also options for sharing activities each in your own time.

Google has an extensive set of tools such as Google Slides, Google Jamboards, and Google Photos, all of which you can use to connect with your grandchild even when you're apart. You can adapt and use many of the activities in this guide in real time together or in your own time through these and other phone or computer apps and websites. We invite you to get creative!

My grandchild and I chat over video, but it's sometimes hard to keep them engaged. What do you recommend?

There are lots of little tips and tricks you can use to keep grandchildren immersed in your call, activity, or game.

- **Sing.** From the earliest age, the best thing you can do is to sing with your grandchildren — nursery rhymes, lullabies, holiday songs. Perhaps sing a song your grandparents sang to you. Sing lovingly, in whatever language you speak or prefer. Click [here](#) for Boomer Lullabies or go to: <https://bit.ly/jgnlullabies>.
- **Set the conversation to a beat.** Percussion instruments are simple to make on your own, and they're easy to use with young children. Make one together over video chat, or just bring your own to delight and entertain them during your call.
- **Use puppets.** Puppets are almost always a big hit with young children. You can use silly voices, act out whole scenes, or just give the puppets some basic movement.

If your grandchild starts to get bored or seems distracted, keep your cool and realize that it likely has nothing to do with you. Just say, "Bye, great to see you, I love you." And then call back again the next day or the next week, whatever you have arranged.

What else can I do with my grandchild at a distance or over video chat?

The Jewish Grandparents Network has 115+ activities and ideas in our **Family Room** <https://bit.ly/jgnfamilyroom> to help you deepen your connection with your grandchild. Here are a few of our favorites for you to use on video chat:

Send a video message



Next time you're thinking of your grandchild, make them a quick video to show you care! Tell a joke, share or read a favorite story, or sing a song you love. Sending it not only shows how much you love them, but gives them a lasting digital keepsake they can come back to, time and again.

Play dramatic games



Young kids love imaginary play. Here are some ideas for easy and simple dramatic games to get your creativity flowing:

Guess What I Am or Guess What I Am Doing: In this game you act out being either an animal or an object — say, a broom or a dreidel — and have your grandchild guess what you are or what you are doing. You can even add in sound effects. Then switch roles with your grandchild. *Alternative:* Instead of acting, use word clues. For example: "I am a fruit. I am yellow and have a peel. Sometimes you eat me for breakfast. What am I?" or "I am soft and fluffy. You put your head on me at night. What am I?" (This is a great game for the car.)

This Is a ... : In this game, you take a household item and say, "This is a plate and it can also be ..." and make up an imaginary use for the item; for example: "This is a plate and it can also be a steering wheel!" and make the movements using the object to act out its new use. Or "This is a piece of matzah and it can also be ..." (maybe a square frisbee!). Now your grandchild can take a turn imagining the item as something else. You can go back and forth and stretch your imaginations by coming up with new ideas.

Theme Day: In this game you set up an imaginary scene, for example, a trip to the zoo. You might gather stuffed animals. Designate a place in the house for each species, or your grandchild can group the animals as they wish.

Find more ideas for imaginary and dramatic play by visiting bit.ly/jgndramaplay.