

## Free or Inexpensive Rewards for Parents

### Young Children

1. Assist the parent with a household chore
2. Send an email to a relative telling them what a good job they had done on a project at school. In other words, email Aunt Linda and tell her about the “A” you got on your spelling test.
3. Get to decorate paper placemats for the dining room table for dinner that evening
4. Get to choose what is fixed for dinner that night- example: “You get to choose, I can make tacos or meatloaf. Which do you want me to fix?”
5. Get to help parent fix dinner- shell peas, peel potatoes, make art out of vegetables, make ants on a log etc.
6. Get to be the first person to share 3 stars and a wish at the dinner table (3 good things that happened that day and one thing they wish had gone better.)
7. Get to create a family night activity- roller skating, hiking in the park, picnic dinner on the living room floor or under the dining room table with blankets over the top.
8. Camp out in the backyard with a parent.
9. Get a car ride to or from school instead of the bus
10. Get to have a picture framed for mom or dad’s office
11. Get to choose the game the family plays together that night
12. Get to choose the story the family reads out loud together (read the classics)
13. Get to go with a parent to volunteer at a retirement home (the children will get tons of attention)
14. Get to gather old toys and take to a shelter for children who have nothing
15. Get to ask friends to bring dog and cat food to their birthday party instead of toys that will break. Take the food to a shelter the day after as a reward. They will get a ton of attention from the staff.
16. Bury treasures in a sandbox for the child to find. Put letters in plastic Easter eggs and they have to put the letters together that spell treat the child will receive. (ideas: a walk with grandma, bike riding at the park, etc.)
17. Make special mud pies in the backyard with mom or dad or have a family contest to see who can make the best mud pie.
18. Dig shapes in the sandbox and then decorate with items found around the house. Pour inexpensive plaster of paris into the shape and wait to dry. When it’s pulled out it will be a sandy relief that can be hung on the wall (if you remember to put a paper clip in the plaster of paris on the top before it dries ☺)
19. Get to go shopping with a parent as an only child. Give them a special task to look for something that you are seeking. For example: “Here’s a picture of a blue blouse that I’m trying to find. Help me look for something that looks like this.”
20. Take all the kids to grandma and grandpa’s except one and let that child stay home with mom and dad and be “only child” for the weekend. The other kids will get spoiled with lots of attention by grandma and grandpa and the “only child” will get lots of attention from mom and dad. (If you don’t have grandma and grandpa nearby- trade with another family taking turns to keep each other’s children.)
21. Download a fun recipe and let your child help you make that recipe as a surprise for the rest of the family that evening. (put up signs that say “Secret Cooking in Progress”. Must have special pass to enter the kitchen.
22. Surprise your child with a scavenger hunt around the house. If they read, give them written clues hinting as to where the next card is hiding. At the end have them find a note that tells them their big prize. (If your child can’t read, you can use pictures.)
23. Make a story on the computer with your child using Microsoft’s PowerPoint program. Let your child be the star of the story.

24. Let your child take the digital camera out in the back yard and then come back in and turn those pictures into a story on the computer. Help them print off their book for a distant family member.
25. Go outside and collect cool leaves and flowers. Come inside and put those leaves and flowers between two sheets of wax paper. The parent will iron these two sheets together and create placemats for everyone in the family for the evening.
26. Start a family story at the dinner table and each person in the family has to tell a part of the story. The child being rewarded gets to start and end the story.
27. Let your child earn 5 minutes of either staying up later or sleeping in in the morning. Use that time to read together if they stay up later.
28. Play secretary and let your child dictate a story to you. Type up the story and send it out to some relatives who will call them and tell them how much they liked the story.
29. Write a story for your child where the child or their personal hero is a character in the story.
30. Change the screen saver on your computer to say "My child is the greatest." ...or something that would make them feel good about themselves. Do this at your office and then take a picture of it or take your child to your office on the weekend and let them see it.
31. Let your child help you do the laundry and then pay them with a special dessert for dinner. Be sure to say, "Since you helped me save time by helping me fold the laundry, I have time to make this special dessert for dinner."
32. Help your child organize their room giving them a mnemonic to help them remember where things go- for instance teach them the color order of the rainbow and then teach them to hang up their clothes in color groups matching the order of the rainbow (ROYGBIV). Later on when you catch them hanging up their clothes in the correct place draw a "rainbow" award for their good work and put it on their door as a surprise when they come home.
33. Have the bedroom fairy come while they are at school and choose the bedroom that is the neatest. Hang a fairy from the doorway of the room that is the neatest and that person gets to sit in "Dad's chair" to read that night. (or something that would be appropriate at your house).
34. Mystery grab bag. Take an old pillow case and put slips of paper inside listing some of the prizes on this page and let the child draw out the prize they are going to get for their behavior reward.
35. Let your child dictate where you drive on the way home from a location. In other words, they have to tell you turn left here...turn right here. If they happen to steer you into a Baskin Robbins Ice Cream Parlor, it wouldn't be a horrible thing to stop and have a family treat together.
36. Give your child a special piece of jewelry that belongs to you to keep and wear for the day. (Nothing that costs a lot of money- but something that looks like it is special to you.) The child will feel special all day long.
37. Take your children to the library one at a time and give them special one on one time at the library checking out books or listening to stories.
38. Sign your child up for acting lessons (they have to have earned this privilege). Many universities offer free acting classes on the weekend for children.
39. Take your child to an art gallery and then have them draw a picture of their favorite painting or statue. Possibly stage a mini art gallery tour of the child's work for relatives who are coming to visit. Serve cheese and grape juice.
40. Take your child to the university astronomy lab. (It is usually free). Help them place stars on the ceiling of their room in their favorite constellation. If possible they could paint the stars with "glow in the dark" paint.
41. Take your child on a nature walk and collect rocks. Bring the rocks back home and have a contest painting the rocks to look like animals.
42. Have your child collect some toys they have outgrown. Clean up the toys and take them to a local hospital children's ward and donate the toys to the ward. The child will get lots of attention and feel good.

43. Go to your local appliance store and ask them to save a refrigerator box for you. The next time your child earns a reward, give them the box and help them plan and decorate the box to turn it into anything their imagination desires.
44. Make Papier-mâché Halloween masks by taking punch ball balloons and spreading the paper strips over the balloon shape. Make noses, horns, tongues whatever they desire and then paint when dry. You will have a unique and free Halloween costume and you will have given your child tons of attention.
45. Find an old fashioned popcorn popper (not an air popper). Spread an old sheet out on the living room floor, put a little oil in the popper and then have your children sit outside the perimeter of the sheet. Put a few kernels of popcorn in the popper and watch them fly up in the air. The kids will love watching this. For a special treat pour cinnamon sugar on the popcorn after it pops.
46. Find some light balsa wood and create a boat powered by a rubber band and paper clip paddle wheel. Make a unique sail and take the boat to a creek or lake nearby and help your child launch their boat. Be sure to take a butterfly net to retrieve the boat when it goes downstream. (Proactively, you could put an eye hook on the front of the boat and attach some fishing line to it so it can be brought back to shore.
47. Take your child fishing. It's a great place to have some really in depth conversations.
48. Take your child for a ride looking for items that start with each letter of the alphabet. Take the child's picture in front of each item that starts with that letter and then put it together as an ABC Book. For example: "This is Johnny in front of Applebees." "This is Johnny in front of BlockBuster." And so on....
49. Check with your local humane society and see if they allow children under 18 to volunteer to feed and water the animals. (Some shelters only allow adults over 18). Let your child earn the privilege of going to the shelter to feed and water the animals. Perhaps they can walk a small dog or pet a cat.
50. Take your child to the local fire department. As long as they are not busy, they will be glad to show the child around and give them some great attention. Most children have seen a fire truck, but few have actually gone to the fire department to see what it looks like.
51. Play the "Gatekeeper Game" with your child. A description of this game is available on [www.behaviordocor.org](http://www.behaviordocor.org) (under books- Stork Manual page 60.)
52. Tell your children you have a surprise performance for them. Get a stocking cap and lay on a sturdy table with your head hanging chin up in the air. Cover all of your face with the stocking cap except your chin and mouth. Draw two eyeballs on your chin and then lip sync to a silly song. It looks really funny, like a little headed person with a big mouth singing. Then let your child put on a performance for you.
53. Play hide and go seek in your house in the dark. Turn out all the lights and have everyone hide. One person is "it" and they have to go around the house and find the people who are hiding. It's really a great way to help your children not be afraid of the dark. You can limit it to one or two rooms if your children are young.
54. Ask your children if they'd rather have a dollar a day for thirty days or a penny a day that doubles each day for 30 days. In other words on day one 1 cent, day two 2 more cents, day three 4 cents and so on. Once they decide then help them figure out which one would have been the better deal. \$10, 737, 418.23 at the end of 30 days with the double the pennies per day.
55. Give your child a nice piece of manila paper and some wax crayons. Have them color a design on every inch of the paper- could be stripes or wavy lines- whatever they desire. Then have them cover the entire page with black crayon. They color over the entire page. Then give them a paper clip and have them open one end and scratch a cool design into the black crayon. The colors underneath will show through. Do an art gallery tour and have tea and cookies after looking at the different pictures.
56. Teach your child how to throw a football, shoot a basket, kick a field goal, hit a baseball, putt a golf ball. Then for fun, switch hands and try to do all of those things with the opposite side of the body.

57. Find an old croquet set- probably on Ebay. Set up croquet in your yard and challenge your child to a game of croquet. The winning child gets to choose what the family eats for dinner.
58. Turn your dining room table into a cave by covering it with blankets, quilts and sheets that cover the top and sides down to the floor. Lay inside the cave and draw picture by flashlight to hang on the wall of the cave- just like the caveman drawings. You can safety pin the pictures to the “cave walls”.
59. Have a talent night for the family. Have everyone keep it a secret what they are doing and then perform for each other.
60. Teach your child how to darn a sock and then turn it into a magical sock puppet. Put on puppet shows for each other.
61. Take a tension curtain rod and put it in the door frame with some old curtains attached. Let your child put on a talent show for you as they enter through the curtain.
62. Attach cork panels to a wall in the kitchen or put in a large picture frame and put a special piece of art, poetry, or an exceptional paper on the board and have the entire family view and comment at dinner on the highlighted piece.
63. Let your child design thank you cards, birthday cards, or holiday cards and use them to send to friends and relatives. Make sure they sign their work.
64. Buy your child an inexpensive digital camera and have them take pictures and then gather the family with popcorn and watch the video on your television by hooking the camera to the television or upload to the computer and attach the computer to the television. Have everyone choose a favorite photo and talk about it.
65. Have a date night with your child as an only child. Take your child out to dinner and a play or a movie.

## Teenagers

1. A gallon of paint is inexpensive. Let the child choose the color and help them paint their room. You can also buy mistake paint (colors that didn't work out for others) and let the child paint a mural on their bedroom wall.
2. Teenagers need extra-curricular activities; however, these activities are expensive. Work out a deal with the karate teacher, horse stable, art teacher, sport coach etc. Offer to provide transportation, house cleaning duties once a month, or precooked meals to get a discount on these classes for your teenager.
3. Teenagers have a difficult time with their emotions. Download yoga lessons from online and do yoga breathing exercises together as a family. Talk to your child about using these techniques when they feel tense at school.
4. Make a deal. If your child maintains the grades you agree upon, does not have any unnecessary absences, and has been agreeable, allow them to take a mental health day and stay home on a day you are home as well. Go window shopping together, fishing, go-kart riding, or whatever would float your child's boat. My mother did this with us when we were children and I still remember these days fondly.
5. Let your teenager play their music during dinner and talk to you about why they like each song that plays.
6. Watch an old black and white classic movie together and talk about how movies have changed. My children loved “Harvey” with Jimmy Stewart when they were teenagers.
7. Write half a story or poem and let your teenager write the other half. Submit the story for publication.
8. Scan your teenager's papers or art work and have them bound in a book (www.lulu.com has inexpensive binding available). Present the book to your teenager at a special dinner.

9. Make a scrap book of your teenager and their friends with ticket stubs and pictures and present at a surprise party.
10. Save your change for a year. Let your teenager choose what to do with that money. One family that I know saved enough to take a family of six to Disneyland.
11. One of the greatest gifts you can give to a teenager is to teach them charity. Sign up to work in a soup kitchen, nursing home, or other similar area and work with them once a month.
12. Organize a neighborhood football or basketball game “oldies” vs “youngsters” or “men” vs. “women” and then have a block barbecue afterwards.
13. Let them drive the “good” car for a special occasion.
14. Surprise them with their favorite dessert for no special reason.
15. Write a story about the 20 things you love about them. Include fun pictures.
16. Choose a family member of the month and make a poster of them. Let them choose Friday night dinners for the month.
17. Teach your children how to play a game like *Spoons*, *Canasta*, *Poker*, etc. and have a family game night.
18. Turn out all the lights in the house and play hide and go seek in the dark. The person that can stay hidden the longest gets to choose the movie the family watches on Saturday night.
19. Hire your child to be an interior decorator and using only items available in the house, redo a room in the house.
20. Do your own *Trading Spaces*. Parents redecorate the teen’s bedroom and the teen redecorates the parent’s bedroom.
21. Use plastic Easter eggs and put dollar amounts in the eggs on slips of paper and number the eggs with a permanent marker. Play *Deal or No Deal* with one of the parents playing the banker.
22. Help your teenager study for a test by downloading a free *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* PowerPoint game and put the answers to your teenagers’ test into the game and then play to help them study.
23. Tape record your student’s study questions onto a tape recorder for them so they can listen to them while they are going to sleep.
24. Make flash cards for your student’s exams to help them study for a big exam.
25. Help your teenager organize their notebook using color coded folders for each subject and pocket folders for study cards.
26. Hide positive messages all over your teenager’s room, in their books they use at home (you don’t want them to get embarrassed at school), on their bathroom mirror, etc.
27. Watch Jeopardy and give each family member a pad of post it notes or index cards. Have everyone write down what they think the answer is and keep points. The person who wins gets to pick what the family does as an activity that weekend.
28. Do some research for your teenager. For example, if your teen is studying Greek Mythology go to the library and check out all the books on Greek Mythology for them or download some appropriate materials from the Internet (be careful of the Internet as some information is not correct).
29. Take your teen to a museum, on a nature walk, to a sporting event, whatever would float their boat. It’s the time you spend with them that is important and there are many free events you can attend.
30. Make a special mix CD for your teen of their favorite songs. You can upload i-tunes and then copy their own CD’s into the program and mix and match their favorite songs onto one CD so they don’t have to flip through CD’s to listen to their favorite songs.
31. Have a contest to see who can find something that no one in the family can guess what it is. For example, a shirt stay, or the inside spring to a toy, things that might not be recognizable away from their use.
32. Have everyone come to the table with a quote and then a contest to see who can guess who made the quote famous.
33. Surprise your teen with a scavenger hunt all over the house when they get home from school. Make the clues hard to figure out. I always had a little prize at the end like baseball cards.

34. Let your teen host the training of a guide dog. This will teach them responsibility and give them a sense of pride.
35. Help your teen become a big brother or sister to a child who needs a mentor. There is no greater gift you can give yourself than that of service to someone in need.