

The Grandparent Guide: What's New? What's the Same?



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

by Kathy Kinsner

Are you a grandparent providing care for your preschool grandchildren? If so, you're not alone. In 2011, **4.8 million children under 5 years old were looked after by grandparents while parents worked.**

You may find you're more patient and relaxed with your grandchildren than you were the first time around. You may also wonder if you're up on the latest child care strategies. Here's a guide to what's new and what has stayed the same when it comes to caring for babies and toddlers. To learn more about a topic, just click on the link.



What's New?



[Eating](#)

You might remember battles with your own kids over finishing everything on their plates. Turns out even babies and toddlers can tell when they're full and it's OK to let them decide what and how much to eat, from a selection of healthy options.



[Sleeping](#)

The latest research says putting babies on their backs to sleep helps prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). And when they are awake, tummy time (playtime while babies are on their bellies) is really important for developing physical skills.

What's New?



Spanking

The debate about whether spanking is helpful or harmful has been going on for a long time. But now experts agree: spanking doesn't work. Spanking may appear to work in the moment. It can get a child's attention and get him to stop what he's doing. But in the long term, spanking has been found to increase a child's aggression, and it doesn't teach how to manage behavior and feelings in positive ways.



Early Brain Development

We know a lot more than we used to about how brains develop. There's a lot going on in there, even in baby's first year. Babies and young children are building more than 1 million new brain connections every second. With loving care, they learn what it means to feel safe, secure, and loved by their first birthday.



What's the Same?



Playing

Play is how kids learn about the world. Grandparents are the perfect partners for pretending and exploring. The best toys have been around for a long time: Blocks, shape-sorters, and pots and pans perfect for making lots of noise!



Talking

Talking and listening are great gifts to give your grandchildren. The more words that babies and toddlers hear, the more they learn. Sharing songs and stories, and answering endless “Why” questions, are great ways to build language skills and the bond between you.



Reading

Every time you snuggle up to read to your grandchild, you're creating two relationships—the one with you and the one with books. Reading aloud builds vocabulary and language, and it helps your little one develop literacy skills needed later on in school. But to her, it's just plain fun.



Unconditional love

Kids need to know there's someone in their corner, no matter what. That's a role most grandparents are happy to fill!

