

How to Write a Letter to Your Daughter She Will Never Forget

One of the greatest gifts you can give your daughter is to affirm her through writing. In a world where written communication is most often casual (texts, emails, tweets), a letter in your own handwriting stands out.

I'll never forget when Abba Project dad Dennis surprisingly noticed that his 13-year-old daughter Olivia not only kept the letter he wrote her but placed it on top of her desk for her friends to see. He had completely expected her to be embarrassed by his card and hide it, especially from her peers. So, as you can imagine, his heart melted when he saw the positive impact his written words had made.

The beauty of putting your thoughts, dreams, love, truth and feelings for your daughter into written form is so that she can read and reread it. She will treasure the things you write to her both now and for years to come.

How do I know this? Because I and many other girls have saved our dad's notes.

I'll tell you a heart story to bring this to light. My dad started a tradition a number of years ago where he creates a one-of-a-kind birthday card for all of us girls by using a template on his computer (you can do the same thing by going online and doing some exploring). Without a doubt, my all-time favorite card is the one he made for my 50th birthday. He made a list of 50 things he and my mom love about me and number 33 is the one that melted my heart:

I laughed uproariously when reading that because I had no idea he'd remembered such a seemingly insignificant thing that I'd

said. But it showed me that he had listened when I said I absolutely love the sound that the choir of frogs make twice a year at the end of my street. It's music to my ears. And he counted it among the things he loves about me.

I share all of this to say that whether or not you're artistic or creative, just the fact that you notice and bring to light the unique things about your daughter, things you find adorable, enjoyable and memorable, you are providing a pathway to her heart that will be a treasure to her forever.

If you're a dad who has already begun this practice, then great.

Yet whether or not you've written letters before, here are a few dad-to-daughter letter-writing ideas to add to your repertoire:

- What was one of the first things you remember about her when she was born and you looked at her for the first time?
- What beauty did you see in her then and what beautiful features do you see in her now? (Girls love hearing about their eyes, smile and the unique features that you see as beautiful)
- Write about a favorite childhood memory you have of her.
- What strengths do you believe she has, both in terms of skill and in her person (her character, personality).
- Tell her specific reasons you're proud of her.
- Write about what obstacles you have seen her overcome—emphasize such qualities as courage, resilience, strength, commitment, endurance, power.
- Write about dreams you have for her future, whether in the form of your wishes for her or things you pray about for her—do this without preaching or lecturing, only encourage.
- Tell her what it means to you to spend time with her.
- Communicate why you love being her dad in this season of

her life (add current things about her age right now that you're aware of and highlight them as positive)

- Let her know that you will always be there for her, telling her what it means to you to be her dad.

If writing is not your thing, still do it (I know ... I'm being a tough teacher right now). I promise that your daughter will thrive in direct proportion to the words you speak (verbal **and written**) into her life.

And the more you hone your writing skills, the easier it will become.

On your mark, get set, write.

Dr. Michelle Watson has a clinical counseling practice in Portland, Oregon, and has served in that role for the past 17 years. She is founder of The Abba Project, a 9-month group forum that is designed to equip dads with daughters ages 13 to 30 to dial in with more intention and consistency, and has recently released her first book entitled, Dad, Here's What I Really Need from You: A Guide for Connecting with Your Daughter's Heart. She invites you to visit for more information and to sign up for her weekly Dad-Daughter Friday blogs, where she provides practical tools so that every dad in America can become the action hero they want to be and their daughters need them to be. You can also follow or send feedback on Facebook and Twitter.

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