

Fathers Around the World

Even though the definition of *father* might be, at its simplest, “a male parent,” the role of the father is both complex and evolving. And while the term means different things to different people, the place dads hold in their families is an important one. As we prepare to celebrate Father's Day, let's explore the world of dads.

Preparations & How-To's

- Print a copy of the complete activity for the facilitator.
- Utilize the Discussion Starter questions to generate a conversation.
- Check out [Additional Activities](#) for more things to do.
- To get the program started, play this video of the song “[Oh! My Papa.](#)” sung by Eddie Fisher. Here are the [lyrics](#) to sing along.
- To bring the program to a close, play this video of the song “[Love Without End, Amen](#)” by George Strait, about a father's love. Here are the [lyrics](#) to sing along.



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Introduction

A study of cultures revealed [three primary roles](#) of the father—protector, provider, and disciplinarian. Whereas these functions remain true for fathers in many cultures, there are considerably more layers of involvement and responsibility for modern dads.

Cultural Differences—East and West

Where you live in the world has a great deal to do with the structure and dynamics of a family and individual roles within it. The world is divided into East and West, with significant cultural differences between the two. The Eastern world includes the countries of Asia and the Middle East. Eastern cultures tend to focus more on routine and discipline, often within an extended family structure with multiple generations living under one roof. The concepts of interdependence, collectivism, and group welfare over individual needs are stressed. The role of the father largely remains that of the breadwinner and authority figure. Fathers are to be obeyed and not questioned.

The Western world includes South and North America and Europe. Australia and New Zealand, technically in the eastern hemisphere, are included in definitions of the Western world because they were significantly influenced by Britain. The parenting focus, often more about individualism and positive reinforcement, tends to be permissive, allowing for free expression and learning from mistakes.

The Industrial Revolution created a separation of home and work, with a resulting change in the father's role. Men were gone during the day, earning money at their job for the family while women

stayed home with the children. Fathers often became distant figures, having little to do with the day-to-day management of children and the home except for when it came to discipline.

Even up until the 1960s, in general men were not allowed in the delivery room, and taking paternity leave after the birth of the baby was not yet invented. There were no advice books for how to be a dad, and the father who knew how to change a diaper was rare indeed.

In recent decades, shifting gender roles and economic demands have necessitated more women's participation in the workforce, leading to a prevalent two-income household model. Consequently, this shift has markedly altered the paternal role, distinguishing contemporary fathers from their predecessors. Below are key ways in which today's dads differ from their fathers and grandfathers:

- Fathers are involved from the very beginning, with an active role in supporting the mother through pregnancy, labor, delivery, and beyond.
- Fathers are more hands-on in the care of their young children. Many dads would say they not only know how to change a diaper but do so on a regular basis.
- Fathers able to spend more time at home with shorter work days have enjoyed a greater participation in the lives of their children at home, school, and with extracurricular activities such as sports, dance, and gymnastics.
- A greater sharing of household and childcare responsibilities has helped in the creation of a deeper partnership between parents. Previously gender-assigned responsibilities such as cooking, grocery shopping, laundry, housecleaning, lawn maintenance, and home repairs are now more equally shared in many households.
- More men have become stay-at-home parents while their wives or partners have taken on the role of primary breadwinner. Not only do many of these men enjoy the role reversal but they have also discovered they are really good at it!
- Girl dads have become comfortable with doing such things as fixing hair, attending pretend tea parties, having their nails painted, and all kinds of "girly" things.
- Both single men and women are now eligible to adopt a child.

Discussion Starters

- How did the way you raised your children differ from the way you were raised?
- What household and child-rearing responsibilities did you share in your household? Did you like to cook or do the laundry?
- As a dad, how involved were you in the birth of your children? Were you present in the delivery room? How would you describe the experience?

A Father's Many Roles

If we had any doubt about the importance of dads, research has demonstrated that a father's affection and increased family involvement are a large factor in a child's social and emotional development. A father's influence is as great as a mother's, and a child secure in the love of their father is less likely to have behavioral and emotional problems. Here are some of the many roles a father plays:

- **Provider dad** – Even though a father might not be the sole breadwinner, his financial contribution is important to the overall economic well-being of the family.
- **Interactive dad** – Actively engaging with children teaches them valuable social and communication skills. Serving as a role model, playing games, having conversations about all kinds of things, and having fun together are critical components of healthy child development.
- **Nurturing dad** – Children need love, and who better to get it from than their hero, their dad?
- **Affectionate dad** – A parent is a child’s first relationship, providing the foundation for all future relationships. Dads provide love and warmth through hugs, kisses, smiles, patience, and understanding.
- **Responsible dad** – Children need guidance and direction. Fathers share equally in the responsibility for teaching and protecting their children.
- **Silly dad** – Saving the best for last! Being able to laugh and have fun with their parent is one of a child’s greatest delights. Having a loving laugh at the expense of dear old dad is one of the reasons dad jokes were invented!

Discussion Starters

- Are there any other roles you would add to this list?
- Which of the above roles would you say you excelled at?
- Do you wish you could have done any of the roles differently or better?

Celebrating Father’s Day Around the World

Celebrating dads on Father’s Day is a tradition throughout much of the world. Here are some ways it is celebrated in different countries:

- **United States:** Father’s Day is celebrated on the third Sunday in June. Commonly, cards are sent, gifts are given, and families gather for barbecues and outdoor activities. Though dad is the hero of the day, most often he still has to man the grill. [Hallmark](#) cites Father’s Day as the fourth-largest U.S. card-sending holiday. It’s estimated some 72 million cards are gifted from children to dads and wives to husbands for the holiday.
- **United Kingdom:** Father’s Day is celebrated on the third Sunday in June. Fathers are honored with gifts, cards, and special gestures. Gifts commonly include socks, ties, and gadgets. Families often gather for meals or outings.
- **Canada:** Canada also celebrates Father’s Day on the third Sunday in June, with the usual cards, gifts, and family gatherings, including outdoor activities and sporting events.
- **Japan:** Father’s Day in Japan, known as *Chichi no Hi*, is celebrated on the third Sunday in June. The typical gift given is a tie, symbolizing working hard and prospering. Families may spend time together, and small gifts and cards might be exchanged.
- **Germany:** Father’s Day in Germany, known as *Vatertag* or *Herrentag*, is celebrated on Ascension Day, which occurs 40 days after Easter. Men gather for outdoor activities such as boating, hiking, or biking. It is not uncommon for groups of men to gather to pull wagons filled with beer and food for their later enjoyment.

- **Mexico:** Father's Day in Mexico, known as *Dia del Padre*, is celebrated on the third Sunday in June. Families give cards, gifts, and prepare special meals. It is typical to attend church services together.
- **Thailand:** Known as *Wan Pho Raksa*, Father's Day in Thailand is celebrated on December 5, the birthday of King Rama IX. Fathers and the king are honored with special events, ceremonies, and acts of kindness.
- **Australia:** In the land Down Under, Father's Day is celebrated on the first Sunday of September with gifts, cards, and spending quality time with dad. Outdoor activities including camping, fishing, and barbecuing are popular.
- **Brazil:** Father's Day, known as *Dia dos Pais*, is celebrated on the second Sunday in August in Brazil. Families gather for special meals. Cards and gifts might be given, and it is common for families to attend church together.
- **South Korea:** In South Korea, Parents' Day, which includes both Mother's Day and Father's Day, is celebrated on May 8. Families often visit the graves of their parents and attend organized activities and events.
- **Russia:** Father's Day is known as Defender of the Fatherland Day in Russia and is celebrated on February 23. Though the holiday celebrates men in general, special attention is paid to fathers. Gifts and cards are given, and children recite poems to their fathers.
- **Spain:** *Dia del Padre* is celebrated on March 19 in Spain. This date is also the Feast of Saint Joseph, a religious holiday honoring the patron saint of fathers. Families often gather for special meals and give gifts and cards.
- **India:** Father's Day is celebrated on the third Sunday in June. Cards, gifts, and special meals are all part of this increasingly popular holiday.

Discussion Starters

- How did you celebrate Father's Day?
- Was there a gift you most often received (such as a tie) that you would have preferred not to have?
- Is there a Father's Day celebration or gift that stands out in your mind as being your favorite?

Dad Jokes – Guess the Punch Line

Ask the joke's question and pause for the audience to guess the punch line.

- Why don't they have Father's Day sales?
Answer: Because fathers are priceless
- What do you call a person who is not a dad who makes dad jokes?
Answer: A "faux pa"
- What did the cheerleader bring her dad for breakfast on Father's Day?
Answer: Cheerios

- What's the best thing a new dad can get for Father's Day?

Answer: A long nap

- Where did the cow family go on Father's Day?

Answer: The *moo*-vies

- Why did the bean children give their dad a sweater for Father's Day?

Answer: He was chili.

- What did the puppies make their dad for Father's Day breakfast?

Answer: Pooched eggs

- What makes more noise than a child jumping on daddy's bed on Father's Day morning?

Answer: Two children jumping on daddy's bed on Father's Day morning!

- What do dads eat for breakfast?

Answer: Pop-Tarts

- What did the waiter say to the daddy dog when he served Father's Day dinner?

Answer: "Bone-appetit!"

- Why couldn't the digital clock make dinner for Father's Day?

Answer: He had no hands.

- What do you call a dad who falls through the ice?

Answer: A *pop*-sicle

- When does a joke become a dad joke?

Answer: When it becomes *ap-parent*

- When does a joke become a dad joke?

Answer: When its fully *groan*

- Why did the dad burst into tears when his son asked, "Can I have a bookmark?"

Answer: Because the kid still doesn't know his dad's name is Brian

- Why do fathers take an extra pair of socks when they go golfing?

Answer: In case they get a hole in one

- What did the buffalo say to his son when he was leaving?

Answer: "Bi-son."

- What's the difference between a bad joke and a dad joke?

Answer: One letter

- Why did the kids ask their dad to stop telling pizza jokes?

Answer: They were too cheesy.

Discussion Starter

Do you have a dad joke to share? The cornier the better.

Dear Dad Letters

Sometimes the best way to let someone know how we feel about them is to write them a letter. Here are samples of some humorous Dad letters to read aloud:

Dear Dad,

Since it's Father's Day, you get three wishes. But remember how you always say it's better to give than receive? So please wish for a cell phone for me and a puppy for Stevie. You can have the third wish unless you want to get me ice skates too.

Love,

Your daughter Georgia

Dear Dad,

You are the best dad in the whole wide world. Maybe even the universe. I love you more than anyone (even mom).

Love,

Jack

P.S. It wasn't me who broke your watch. It fell off the table all by itself. I was an innocent bystander.

Dear Dad,

Could you please, please, please get me tickets to the Taylor Swift concert? If you do I promise to never ask for anything again in my life. And on Father's Day I'll make you breakfast and be nice to my awful sister who will *not* be going to the concert!

Love you (and Taylor Swift) to the moon,

Stacie

Dear Dad,

You are very smart and a really good dad. You're the kind of dad who understands his son needs more money for his allowance. I am hoping you will think about this and make the right decision.

Love you,

Your really broke son

Dear Dad,

Everything I am, I owe to you. You are my hero. I want to grow up to be just like you.

Happy Father's Day. Enjoy. I can't promise I'll be this nice to you again next year when I become a teenager.

Love,

Peter

Discussion Starters

- Do you recall any funny letters your children sent to you?
- Did you save mementos from your children, such as letters, drawings, report cards, and awards? If so, what did you do with them once your children were grown?
- Do you have any similar mementos saved from your childhood?

Your Turn

Do you have some things you wish you could tell your dad? Take a few minutes to write a short letter to your dad saying those things. For those who wish, share your letter with the group.

Last Thought

Happy Father's Day, Dad. You were right—about everything.

Additional Activities

1. Print a [copy of the poem](#) "Only a Dad" by Edgar Guest for the facilitator to read aloud or participants to take turns reading.
 2. Here are some [possibilities for movies](#) to watch about dads.
 3. Enjoy these [fun facts about fathers](#).
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Only a Dad

by Edgar Guest

Only a dad with a tired face,
Coming home from the daily race,
Bringing little of gold or fame
To show how well he has played the game;
But glad in his heart that his own rejoice
To see him come and to hear his voice.

Only a dad with a brood of four,
One of ten million men or more
Plodding along in the daily strife,
Bearing the whips and the scorns of life,
With never a whimper of pain or hate,
For the sake of those who at home await.

Only a dad, neither rich nor proud,
Merely one of the surging crowd
Toiling, striving from day to day,
Facing whatever may come his way,
Silent whenever the harsh condemn,
And bearing it all for the love of them.

Only a dad but he gives his all
To smooth the way for his children small,
Doing with courage stern and grim,
The deeds that his father did for him.
This is the line that for him I pen:
Only a dad, but the best of men.

