

Isaac Schlichting
1st grade

What My Father Means To Me

My dad is the best because he likes to spend time with me! He makes me feel important and very loved. My dad teaches me right from wrong. My dad lets me have more privileges when I am responsible.

My dad is a tall guy who smiles a lot. I hope to be just like him when I grow up!

My dad and I like to play Qwirkle, Uno and all kinds of sports. Our favorite sport is to play baseball. I really enjoy playing baseball with him because when he was a little boy he liked to play baseball and now I know how to play too because of him. In fact, he taught me to hit a ball with a bat when I was only 2 years old!

My dad is very patient when he is teaching me to play a sport. He breaks down the parts into easier pieces so I can understand them better. Even if I'm afraid, he helps me to keep trying. When I learned to ride my bike, he encouraged me to keep getting back on until I finally got it right! It took all day! When he would say, "You can do it," I was able to keep pedaling longer each time.

If I could ask my dad for one thing, it would be for him to spend more time at home with me and less time at work. I just like to be around him because he makes me feel safe and special. I love him more than anything.

Emma Robinson
2nd grade

What My Father Means To Me

When I think of my dad, I think of love, care and trust. He means a lot to me. He's always there for me. When I need help, he helps me. When I am scared, he comforts me. He takes me places he doesn't want to go. He cares for me. He loves me. I trust him with all my heart. My dad and I have a special bond. When I am around my dad, I feel happy. I have an awesome dad.

Ben Zaccardi
3rd grade

Hi, I am Ben and I have a special dad named Jim. I know my dad loves me. I love him too, but sometimes I get mad at him. That is okay. I'm pretty sure all kids do that.

My dad and I bond a lot. Usually when we bond, we go to hockey games together. That is my dad's and my favorite sport. In hockey, my dad coaches me and I find that cool to have a dad that can coach. The most important thing is that he gives his time to me. Sometimes he has to take time with my sisters, but that's okay because if he only spent time with me they would feel left out.

I love my dad with all my heart and he loves me too. And don't get me wrong, I still love my mom also.

*Dallyce Jade Huizenga
4th grade*

What My Father Means To Me

Love does not even begin to explain what my father does for me. There are probably one million words to describe him but one stands out; kindhearted. You see, my real dad wasn't always there for me. My real dad was a drinker and was very physical. He left when I was 6 and moved to Alaska.

But then, Ryan came in. He was nice and didn't think we were bad kids. He loved us and all we wanted was to be loved. And before he asked my mom to marry him, out of all respect, he asked me, my two sisters and brother if he could marry our mom. And, of course, we said yes. I remember my speech by heart. One night when Ryan tucked me in, he asked me, "Do you know the difference between a dad and a father?" Well, the father makes the babies and a dad cares and provides for the babies and I found a dad in Ryan. We go to the movies and go tubing. But your question, my stepfather means the world to me and I could not ask for a better DAD.

Garrett Dwire
5th grade

What My Father Means To Me

What my dad means to me, well, here it goes. He is a person to lean on, a person to cry on and a person to laugh with. For example, whenever I need help, I can always count on him for help. Another example is when my grandpa died, he was someone to cry with. Whenever I need cheering up, he always makes me laugh. He is also a person to hug, a person to play with and a person that will always be there for me. Whenever I need a hug, he's always there. Whenever I want to play catch in the yard or play basketball in the driveway, he drops what's in his hands and plays with me. He is always there when I need him.

Every sport I play, he coaches or assistant coaches. He has been to just about every practice and game of every sport I've ever played so he is my number one fan. When I need advice, he is the first person I go to so he is my counselor. When I'm stuck on a math problem, he helps me so he is my teacher. Whenever I need a pep talk, he is the one that gives it to me so he is my encourager. He pushes me to be my best so he is my motivator. I always feel loved. I look up to him so he is my inspiration. I always know he is proud of me. That is how I know he is my dad.

Izzy (Isabella) Charlton
6th grade

All the way from birth,
Up 'til present day,
Dad, I love you so much,
I just want to say:

Thanks for being there,
These past eleven years.
You've been through the fights and fury,
And all those dreadful tears.

At some points,
I thought it couldn't get any worse,
Until I saw you walk in,
I was thinking in reverse!

It couldn't get much better,
I had a dad that spent a lot of time with me.
You were the best dad ever
As far as I could see.

You are not a father,
No, you are not.
You are a dad,
One I'm lucky I've got.

Mady Koehler
7th grade

What My Father Means To Me

Father, rey, daddy, papa, opi, tatay no matter what you call them or how you slice it, everyone's got one. Good or bad, love them or not, most of us have a male role model in our lives that we may or may not refer to as dad. I believe that the title "dad" is a proud reference to that one person that was there for you; for everything, no matter how big or small, and loves you unconditionally through thick and thin. That's a dad. In my life the person that meets my definition requirements I've never called dad. I've always called him grandpa.

Grandpas are just as good as a dad! Why is this, you may ask? Well, because my mother already broke him in! This isn't his first time. My grandpa already knows how to help me with my homework. He's really good at math. He is at all my sporting events because he is retired and has lots of time for me. My grandpa even stays to watch me cheer. He even stands and cheers along. Grandpa has done things that my dad would never have done. He is strong and kind and always tells me how much he loves me. He never forgets. I think he learned this when he was a just "a dad minus the grand."

In conclusion, the word dad is just really a word. It only holds meaning by the actions that person shows. So, I may not call my grandpa "dad" but he loves me like my dad. He is every bit as special to me. Grandpa, you're in my hall of fame! I love you!

Kristen Busch
8th grade

What My Father Means To Me

My dad always has taught me: “Love can’t be beat.”

At first, when I was younger, I disagreed. I would think to myself, love can be beat by black holes and superpowers, even samurai. For some reason, my father disagreed. Much like “Rock, Paper, Scissors,” I thought love had to be beatable. It’s the laws of the world. Rock beats scissors, scissors beats paper and paper beats rock. So, what beats love?

As I grew older, I came to the conclusion hate beats love. I would think of Hitler, of all the horrors he had inflicted upon the world and I thought love had finally lost. Still, my father disagreed. He told me the story of a priest; a simple man imprisoned in a concentration camp, who sacrificed his life in exchange for the life of a complete stranger. He explained to me that even in the darkest of places, love still survives. Skeptical as I was, when I looked up into his eyes, I know the love in them could never be beat. Not by Hitler, black holes or even superpowers.

Of all the lessons my father has taught me, his simple phrase of love, has been what best describes him. Because of him, and what he means to me, my vision of love has grown from a simple Valentine’s Day red heart into a smiling father with radiant eyes, warm hugs and quirky anecdotes. He represents the love that exists in the world. Love so strong, it’s unbeatable!

Ellie Davenport
9th grade

What My Father Means To Me

The definition of a father is “a man in relation to a child.” My father, however, is more than seven words and a period. He defines inspiration, encouragement, guidance, discipline, common sense, and mentorship.

He’s taught me to laugh at my weaknesses and imperfections. I wear a body brace for scoliosis. I inherited it from my dad. Affectionately, he calls me his little “humpback whale.” I made a website dedicated to inspiring other girls with scoliosis; www.gotscoliosis.com. If I can laugh at difficult things, difficult things will never rule me.

I also have dyslexia. Dyslexia is frustrating because no one can see it, but sometimes it makes me look stupid. My dad says it’s a gift and I believe him. So, I laugh at dyslexia and all the funny things I do because of it.

Through windsurfing, he taught me how to get through hard times. When I was learning, I would get tired and bored; I wanted to quit. But he always said, “We are not leaving until the wind becomes your friend.” So we stayed. I complained. On more than one occasion, I got blown to the middle of the lake only to become stranded. Dad would sail out to me and sail us both back to shore; back to safety. No lectures, no guilt, just love. Finally, one day, I mastered how to use the sail, and the wind stopped being my adversary. It was my new best friend.

My dad inspires me through his actions, his morals and his British accent. He strives to stand for what he believes in --- and he believes in me. He’s impacted me in ways I don’t even know yet. I can’t control the world around me but because of my dad, I can always laugh and adjust my sail.

Austen Eberhardt
10th grade

The Dreamers

“To become the best you can be, you’re going to have to face a lot of failures to show you how good you can become. It’s your choice if you want to turn this defeat into strength.” This is the only thing my father said to me, one hot June evening after my disaster of a debut baseball performance. This is also the only thing my father said as we went over my atrocious report card last year. Me and my father share many things in common, but one sticks out; we both dream the impossible. My father was and always will be the engine driving me to believe in myself.

My dad is the reason I trust myself and believe. However, one year ago, I had just finished the worst baseball season any individual could have. I got mononucleosis and spent my year blowing off homework and failing classes. I was depressed, angry and didn’t believe in my future. But, instead of letting me slip and never getting back up, my father worked with me to make me believe in myself again. As a result of my dad’s support, I made the “A” Honor Roll this year for the first time and I’m aiming to make the JV baseball team. I’ve turned my life around just because of my dad’s belief in me.

My dad is just like any other ordinary dad, but he is a role model to me. No matter my failures, he’ll be there to help pick me up again. And through it all, I’ll always remember the most important lesson he taught me --- never quit on what you love, because what you love is what’s worth living for. My father was and always will be the engine driving me to believe in myself.

Kayla Ramos
11th grade

What My Father Means To Me

I'll never forget the day my grandfather walked through the door of the foster home. I was five years old.

I thought my life was over before it had even begun. I remember feeling homeless. I remember strange people and scary faces. All I had were those early memories.

It would probably take years to understand the depth, the wisdom, the amazing strength and the heart-wrenching sorrow my grandfather felt. You would have to go back in time and live through it yourself to grasp even a fragment of understanding. You would have to feel for yourself the extreme amount of stress my grandfather has felt.

He has had to raise children two separate times in his life. Most days I feel guilty for that. I feel like I took all of his life and used it all up. And still, on other days, I feel grateful. He is the strongest person I have ever met in my entire life. He is my role model. I can absolutely credit him for the values I hold today.

A Vietnam vet, tough as nails, yet surprisingly, my grandfather can walk up to a random person and act as if he had known them his entire life. That always amazed me. I so admire these qualities in this beautiful man. I strive to be as courageous and humble as he has always been.

The crazy thing is nobody ever once told him he had to adopt my brother, sister and I. Nowhere did he ever sign the contract saying he would push me forward with all the encouragement and love his tired heart could muster up. He didn't refuse to give up on me no matter how many times I broke his trust and faith in me. He chose to love me unconditionally.

Andre McHenry
12th grade

What My Father Means To Me

Steven Andree, the best man in the world. The reason why I'm writing about my grandfather is because he is my role model, mentor and father figure in life. Since the day I was born, he was there to support me, provide me with love and the essential qualities I needed in life. I grew up without having a dad around to show me how to become a man, play sports, build relationships with people or even how to treat a woman.

My grandfather stepped up and showed me how and the best way he did it was by example. He married his wife, Valarie Andree and they stayed together for over 40 years until her death in May 2012. He showed me that even when your life partner passes, they're still with you in spirit. He still remembers everything about my grandma as if it were yesterday.

The most memorable and touching moment between us was May 22, a day after prom. My neighborhood was destroyed by a tornado that hit North Minneapolis. Trees were knocked down everywhere and many homes were destroyed or had no electricity. My grandfather came all the way from Rhinelander, Wisconsin to my house which is about a 5 hour drive. This man came to the rescue when we were in so much need of help. We cleared the trees with his chainsaws and even helped other people who needed lots of assistance.

When we were done he told me, "Andre, I'm so proud of you. You're finally becoming a man! Putting others before yourself shows compassion, empathy and a strong will." During this moment, I hugged him and told him how thankful I was to have a grandfather like him. Best moment in my life and that's why he's my role model.