

# 101 Things to Do on Sunday with Small Children

*We can teach even a child to understand the doctrine of Jesus Christ. The best time to teach is early, while children are still immune to the temptations of their mortal enemy, and long before the words of truth may be harder for them to hear in the noise of their personal struggles. The question should not be whether we are too tired to prepare to teach doctrine or whether it wouldn't be better to draw a child closer by just having fun or whether the child isn't beginning to think that we preach too much. The question must be, "With so little time and so few opportunities, what words of doctrine from me will fortify them against the attacks on their faith which are sure to come?"*

(Elder Henry B. Eyring, Ensign, May 1999, 73)

Our challenge is to use our Sabbaths to actively teach our young children the gospel.

Here are some ideas:

1. Listen to the CD's of the Children's Songbook and learn new songs
  - have the child/children help you make posters for the new songs you're learning
  - glue pop corn onto brown paper for "Pop corn popping;" plant a seed for "The Prophet said to plant a garden;" make a photo collage for "We are a happy family"; draw pictures of the Savior for "Jesus has risen;" cut out pictures of children from magazines for "All over the world at the end of day"; make paper tissue flowers for "I often go walking;" make a play dough earth for "Whenever I hear"; etc., etc.
  - these songs will invite the Spirit into our homes, and teach the gospel powerfully and memorably to our children (and us!)
2. Spend time making special treats for the upcoming family home evening
3. Prepare lessons and activities for family home evening. If the children use time on Sunday to give dress rehearsals for their part of family home evening (whether it be a talent they are going to share, a testimony, a lesson or talk), they will build confidence. Even young children can find ways to participate in family home evening.
4. Talk about the stories in the Gospel Art Kit (put a new picture on the refrigerator each Sunday, learn the story on Sunday, and then review it all week)
5. Expand your picture file/add to the pictures in the Gospel Art Kit (go through old Church magazines, and cut out and then file gospel pictures; the inside covers of the Ensign, for example, always have great pictures for this purpose)
6. Read the scriptures and the adapted scripture version for children (my 2-year-old loves the New Testament Reader--it's her very favorite book; she asks for stories from it every

night--who would've thought? And I've talked to lots of other moms, who say the same thing!)

7. Read the *Friend* magazine

8. Write in a journal for your child and/or let the child illustrate the journal

9. Look through old family photos, and tell the children stories about when they were "even littler" (this boosts their self-esteem, to know that Mommy loves telling and retelling stories about when they were born, how they used to talk, what they used to like to do)

10. Make tapes, cards, and letters for out-of-town relatives

11. Get your child's Nursery or Primary manual (available for very cheap at [www.ldscatalog.com](http://www.ldscatalog.com) or for free at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org)) and teach lessons/share stories/play the games suggested in the manual (this will make your kid feel extra smart when she gets to primary; she will already be familiar with the stories and the lessons; she will already be used to seeing the pictures from the Gospel Art Kit; just the way we get so much more out of a book when we read it a second time, or we understand a movie on a deeper level when we watch it the second time, our children will understand their church lessons much better, if we've gone over and over those ideas at home)

12. Take a walk in nature and talk about the beautiful world Heavenly Father has given us (and the symbolism in nature--spring flowers remind us of Easter, evergreen trees remind us of Christmas and how Jesus' love for us is unchanging and constant, etc.)

13. Do service together (make treats for a mother who just had a new baby; visit an elderly ward member or neighbor, but let your child direct the visit so that s/he learns the joy of serving)

14. Focus on teaching PRINCIPLES of Sabbath Day observance that will be easily accepted while the child is young, but will guide the child as s/he grows (for example, we don't watch TV or videos on Sundays, because we want the house to be especially reverent [this will eliminate potential future conflicts over whether or not certain media is Sabbath-appropriate]; we take nature walks on Sunday but we don't play at the park; we listen to music but only reverent music, we read books but only church books-- all of these are ways we show love for Heavenly Father and his special day) [One way this could be done is by trying to center all of the playing on Sunday around scripture stories or gospel ideas. For example, a few Sundays ago, we were playing with blocks as a family. Earlier in the morning, we had been reading about Joseph Smith. So we used our blocks to build the Hill Cumorah, and then we chose one special block to be the Golden Plates and we buried it at the bottom of the hill. Likewise, when we play with play dough on Sunday, we use it make whatever gospel-related things we've been talking about.]

15. Talk about the Sabbath Day. Reenact the creation, emphasizing that God rested on the seventh day. Reenact the children of Israel in the wilderness, collecting extra manna on the day before the Sabbath, and not collecting any on the Sabbath. Reenact Moses

receiving the 10 Commandments and teaching the children of Israel about the importance of the Sabbath, etc.

16. Try to psych the kids up for Sunday on Saturday by singing "Saturday is a special day" and emphasizing all day that you are doing things on Saturday so that you won't have to do them the next day. ("We're washing your hair now, so that you'll be ready for church tomorrow." "We're doing laundry today/shopping at the store today/cleaning the house today/setting out your Sunday clothes today/etc., so that we won't have to do these things tomorrow. Tomorrow, we'll be able to focus on showing our love for Heavenly Father." It's all about the day-before hype!

17. Have the child teach you the lesson s/he learned in Church that day. Make a special treasure box to hold their Sunday handouts.

18. Make Sunday night a family gathering night. This can grow into a sweet multigenerational tradition for your family in the years to come. Imagine how great that would be 50 years from now--but, of course, the time to start that tradition is while the children are young enough to LOVE, LOVE, LOVE that family time and not resist! Later, they won't question it--it will just be part of their family life. (Sing songs, give hugs, eat something special, eat by candle light, anything to make it different and special.)

18. Memorize scriptures

19. Do some of the fabulous family activities listed on the church website (go to [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org), click on "home and family" and then "family activities")

20. Bear your testimony to your child, talk about your prayers that have been answered that week, tell them what you've been praying for--especially what you've been praying for them

21. Let your child see your example of fulfilling your church calling and explain to them what you're doing and why you're doing it (take them home/visiting teaching, let them be with you as you prepare your calling)

22. Go to the church early and practice being reverent; role play at home before hand what reverence is (it's more than just quietly sitting! It's thinking the right thoughts. Children love to role play this to show that they know what the right answers are!)

23. Tell stories, stories, stories (with puppets, flannel boards, or just off the top of your head) (personal stories, stories from the Friend available at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org), scripture stories-- your child will be so busy listening to your story, that s/he won't complain about you putting on their Sunday clothes, doing their hair, etc. ) (It may help to think of and review 3 or 4 stories the night before, so that you know which scripture stories you will tell your kids when called on to tell stories the next day. You won't have to think about them in the moment of.)

24. Another Sunday tradition (on the car ride to church, at family prayers that night) might be to have each member of the family say what they love best about each other member of the family. With little kids, this could be done sitting in a circle rolling a ball back and forth.

25. Participate in easy family history by eating your mom's favorite pan cakes and telling your kids a story about your mom, or eating a dish from your/your spouse's missionary days and telling about your missionary experiences, or a dish from your ancestors' home land, and telling a story about your heritage.

27. There are lots of story games to play:

- Dress Up & Role Play
- Charades
- Bag of Clues (pull out one surprise from your bag of surprises, have the child guess the story, then retell the story)

Here's a list from the book, "Favorite Sunday Activities":

Toy boat: Noah (Genesis 6-8) or Lehi and Nephi (1 Nephi)

Smooth stones: Brother of Jared (Ether 3)

Sling shot: David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17)

Fish: Miracle of loaves and fishes (Matthew 14) or Jonah (Jonah 1-4)

Golden plates: Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith

Salt: Lot's wife (Genesis 19)

Snake: Adam & Eve (Genesis 3)

Tree: Zacchaeus (Luke 19)

Seeds: Parable of the sower (Matthew 13)

Tower: King Benjamin (Mosiah 2)

Manger: Birth of Jesus (Luke 2)

Lions: Daniel (Daniel 6)

Scissors: Samson (Judges 16)

So that's only 27, not 101! But it might spark an idea or two for you. My guess is that great Sabbaths are made possible by what we as parents do on Saturday night to prepare (is the diaper bag ready? are the clothes laid out? is dinner something simple or in the crock pot? have I given some thought to what gospel principle I want to focus on tomorrow with my kids/what song I want to teach them/what activity I want to do with them/what stories I want to tell them). Even more than that, it must be about prayer, and praying, praying, praying for the Spirit, so that no matter what obstacles and challenges come our way, we can still have the Spirit in our home.

I love what Sister Coleen K. Menlove, Primary General President, said in her Conference talk last fall: *"The key to accomplishing effective gospel teaching in the home is to invite the Spirit of the Lord to be with us. Some of the best counsel my husband and I received during some turbulent times of raising our children was to do all that is possible to invite and keep the Spirit in our home. Children cannot learn spiritual things and have spiritual feelings without the guidance of the Spirit."*

If we can have the Spirit in our homes on Sundays, I think we will be a lot of the way toward teaching our children about our Father's ways.