

# Grandparent

by Rodney Martin

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*Grand* came from Anglo-French *graund* 'big, large' in the late 1300s. *Parent* appeared in the early 1400s from Latin *parere* 'give birth to'. Originally *grandame*, *grandmother* was in use before 1420 and *grandfather* soon after in 1424. The next older generation *great* is from Old English *grete* 'big, important, excellent' (late 1100s), but *great-grandfather* did not appear until 1513.

Obviously the older generations have always been 'big' in the eyes of the next gen. But the idea of them being 'important and excellent' has also rung true in history.

Even greater is the joy that grandparents feel with the arrival and development of their grandchildren. It has been said by some that if they knew how great it is having grandchildren, they would have by-passed having kids!

The role of grandparenthood is of course different from parenthood. The door mat with the words 'Grandchildren spoilt here!' gives a hint. Probably the most important aspect of 'spoiling' is the giving of devoted attention to the new generation – time which busy parents are often unable to give.

Grandparents are often more relaxed than parents. They carry a 'been there, done that' attitude and are aided by the knowledge that they can give the kids back after the fun. These periods of intense attention can be very stimulating for children.

Grandparents provide a different environment for play and interaction. They can be an important audience for responding to young children's language and vocabulary development as kids re-tell their latest experiences and use those inevitable words – why, what, where, who and when.

The old maxim 'Give me children till the age of seven and they are mine for life' came from the field of education. Grandparents can have the time and patience to build relationships with their grandchildren in ways that influence them for life.

Build big, important, excellent bonds with your grandchildren for their sake, and yours. And parents, chill out when your parents disobey the rules and spoil your children with attention ... that's their job!