



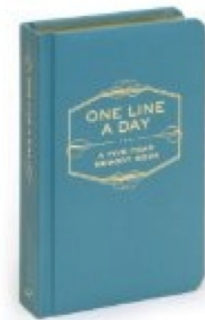
Three Ways to Connect and Make a Memory at the Same Time, by Cara Day

Family life seems to move along quickly, especially once children reach the 'tween years. It's easy to reach the time when children are moving out and realize you didn't do some important things you wish you had. Written expression is a milestone for young children, and an essential tool in the lives of many adults. Writing is most commonly thought of as being used by authors, students, and people who write as part of their profession. Writing to and with your family opens doors and dialog, creating a silent, yet powerful love language within the home.

These three activities are rich in creating connection throughout childhood, as well as creating a keepsake that will last for all time.

1. **Family Almanac:** The family almanac is a treasure you can create with your family. You can make one by printing this [PDF](#), or by purchasing this journal, [One Line A Day](#) on Amazon.

You can also make one using an index card filing box filled with index cards, one card for every date in the year, separated by tabs for each month, in order.



No matter which style you use, the blank almanac creates place to record information for every single day of the year, just like a traditional almanac. Except this almanac is all about the people and achievements in your family. Over the years, the dates fill up, creating a record of all your family happenings—the ups and the downs, the big and the small, the silly and the serious.

To start using your almanac, begin recording family happenings on the dates they occur. If your children are older, you can backtrack to when each person was born, enter their growth milestones, and then keep adding. For example, include everyone's birthday, when they walked, their first day of kindergarten, and other things that matter to you.

Continue to include their first winter formal, the day they got their driver's permit and high school graduation. Family milestones or special events can also be recorded, such as moving to a new home, a new job and the like. Keep the almanac near the family dinner table, or in another central location. Add to it at dinner time, or whenever something great happens, and look through it together from time to time.

Everyone will enjoy laughing and remembering the fun and special times that have happened in each person's life, as well as in the life of the family. This is a keepsake that takes only minutes each month, yet records a lifetime of memories. If you make one out of the PDF below, this could later be easily copied for everyone to have their own keepsake.

2. Pillow Journal: The pillow journal is a small journal or notebook that is shared between parent(s) and child. A parent can begin the pillow journal by purchasing a small journal. Moleskin, pictured below, makes great ones in many sizes and styles. A picture of the child or the parent and child can be affixed with a gluestick on the cover, if you wish. Begin by writing an entry, letting your child know that this will be your special journal that you can write back and forth to each other with. Tell your child some things you want them to know, then ask a few questions. In your first note in the journal, ask your child to write back to you and to place the journal on your pillow after he or she has written. When you finish your first entry, place the journal on your child's pillow. Your child will find and read it, write back to you, and put it on your pillow. You can write back and forth as often as you like, whether every day, or every week or so.



Children of all ages will light up when they see the journal on their pillow, and hopefully you will, too. When a journal like this is kept for many years, it accomplishes a number of things. First, it creates a communication device that is a safe and wonderful way for parents and children to share their feelings and ideas.

Next, pillow journals can be used to give feedback about behavior and growth that you want to see continue. They can also be used to express concerns, or ask your child to work on a specific behavior or habit. This is a much more effective way to help your child become their best self than through lecturing or nagging during a stressful interaction.

If you and/or your child likes to draw, you can turn it into a writing and sketch journal. Or, you can draw simple comics that reflect funny things that have happened in your family, or that are fictional. If you decide to use colored pencils or other special writing utensils, put the journal and these items in a small canvas or plastic bag for easy access.



For your child, a pillow journal can be a way to share feelings or frustrations about situations he or she has experienced, siblings, or even you! If you fill your entries with large doses of love, your child's entries will start to contain the same. Tell your child what you see in him or her, what you've noticed, and what you love about him or her. You will have created a very powerful love language with your child through written expression.

And, it will perhaps become something they will re-create in their own marriage or family, in some form or another.

3. **Shutterfly:** For many of us, the days of spending many dollars and hours making scrapbooks by hand are a thing of the past. While nothing perhaps can replace these handmade treasures, Shutterfly has created a wonderful way to keep memories that is easy, affordable and priceless—all at the same time.



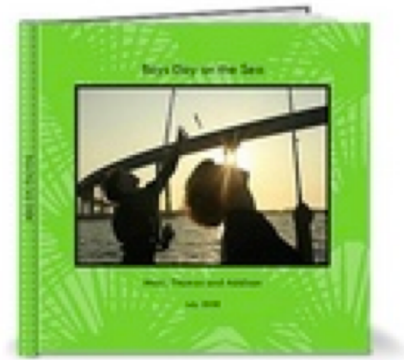
If you go to www.Shutterfly.com, you can click on Photo Books to see samples. In under an hour, you can upload photos and make photo story books of your family members, celebrations, vacations and happenings. The books come as small as 3 inches, all the way up to large, beautiful leather albums. They come in fun colors and designs for kids' birthdays, Mother's Day and holidays, or traditional leather or suede for timeless keepsakes.

Even the prices of a larger book including hundreds of photos are comparatively very reasonable. You get an entire, completed album filled with hundreds of your photos, delivered to your door, with your design and journaling, for about the cost of buying a high-quality album—that's empty.

Other sites offer similar services, such as Kodak, Sony and Ritz. I tried some of these, but their product quality and pricing did not compare to Shutterfly. Also, coupons are often available online. Once you create an account, you will receive offers via email with significant discounts at times, including two-for-one.

Small paper versions of every album you make can also be ordered upon check-out. These smaller, less expensive copies are perfect for giving to young hands, so they can enjoy a copy of their very own to keep in their room.

There is no limit to what you can create—from a family recipe book complete with your own photos of the meals, to a vacation keepsake complete with detailed journaling (in the font, borders and colors of your choice), to a special book made about your child for their birthday or other milestone. Teenagers can use the site very easily, or you can on their behalf, to create treasures of their special times, sports, dances, and friendships throughout high school.



Another spectacular use of Shutterfly's photo book service is to create photo readers, with your child as the star. These are terrific for early reading instruction. Come up with a patterned sentence, such as, "I like to _____.", "I see _____.", or "We go _____." and fill the book with photos of your little one that match the sentences. Be sure to use an enlarged, easy-to-read font.

Recording and sharing family memories in this way on regular basis shows children that they are part of an important family—your family. I especially like how anytime we are in a family funk and someone starts flipping through one of our albums, we all start to soften and smile, remembering the fun time we had here or there. Overall, these albums are a great addition to family life.