

FOR
SCHOOL AGE
CHILDREN

WRITING

ACTIVITIES

ART

E-MAIL

VIDEOS

PROJECTS

ARMY KIDS

FUN

ACTIVITY BOOK



DEPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS



Army Kids Fun Activity Book: School Age Children is one of a series of six booklets about Army separations for children and young people ages 3 to 17. These booklets were written as part of Operation READY under contract between the University of California, Riverside and the US Army Community & Family Support Center, Family Programs Directorate.

All six booklets were developed with the help of active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve families, Army Community Service personnel, and Child and Youth Services staff members.

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University of California Cooperative Extension

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We sincerely thank all those who helped us produce these booklets.

August 2002

OPERATION
READY
Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

This book is intended as an Activity book which school age children can work on with a parent or care provider to address the issues of a parent's deployment with hands-on activities.

There are "Notes for Grown-ups" throughout the book which give additional information and ideas to help school age children understand and cope with parental separation due to deployment.

My Army Family



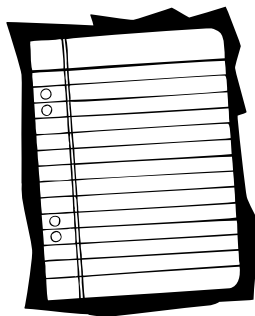
School Age Children's Fun Activity Book

Fun Activities for Children Ages 6-9



Note for Grown-ups:

Even when the idea of a parent leaving seems to upset school age children, they still like to know what is happening and what their parents are doing. It's easier for children to cope with a parent's upcoming absence when they understand how important their parent's job is and why the parent needs to go away to do this job. Talk to children about what kind of work their parents are doing for the Army. Don't wait until a parent is deploying to talk about his or her job. Children are always very interested in what adults do when they are at that mysterious place called "work."



If possible take advantage of an opportunity for your child to see his/her parent working or to visit the parent's worksite on post; or have a co-worker take a picture of the soldier-parent at work. Explain that sometimes soldiers do their jobs near their homes and sometimes need to work in other places that may be far away.

Especially when children have PCS'd before, it may be difficult for them to understand why they can't go with Mom or Dad THIS TIME. Explain that the parent is going where there aren't places for children and families to live and play and go to school; that parents will live in barracks or tents and need to share their rooms with other soldiers. Emphasize that whenever a parent CAN take their family with them they will try to do so, but sometimes an Army job sends soldiers to places where families cannot join them.

Keep the language and explanation at the child's level. Children this age still need concrete explanations. Be prepared to repeat the explanation, as school age children still may need information reinforced a number of times.

Do not assume that your child is not interested if he or she has not asked about a parent's work or why the parent is going away. Provide the information voluntarily. Children may not know just what question to ask to get information that can help them understand or they may be unsure whether it is okay to ask questions. Provide as many facts as you can about when, where, and with whom the parent is going away; and for how long the parent will be gone. Children find it much easier to deal with change when they have appropriate information. Talk about how the parent's absence will affect or change the family and its day to day routine.

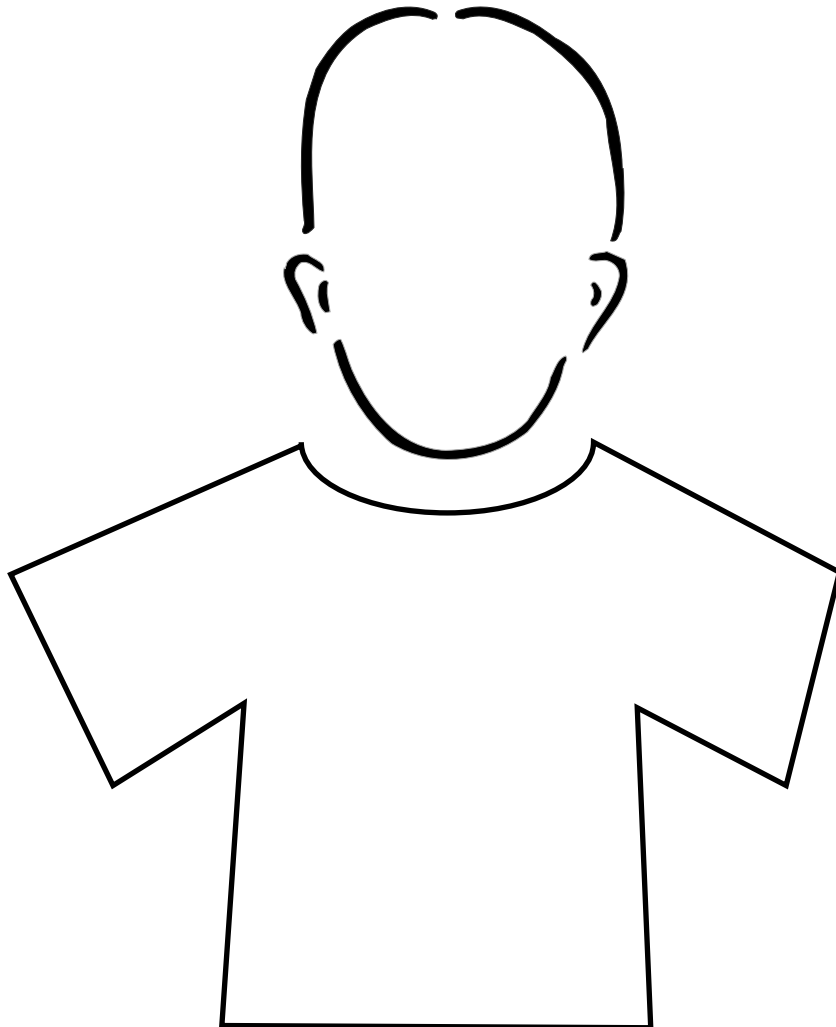
Your Army Family

This book is For you! You are a very special person who belongs to a very special Family because you have a Mom or Dad in the Army.

What's your name? _____

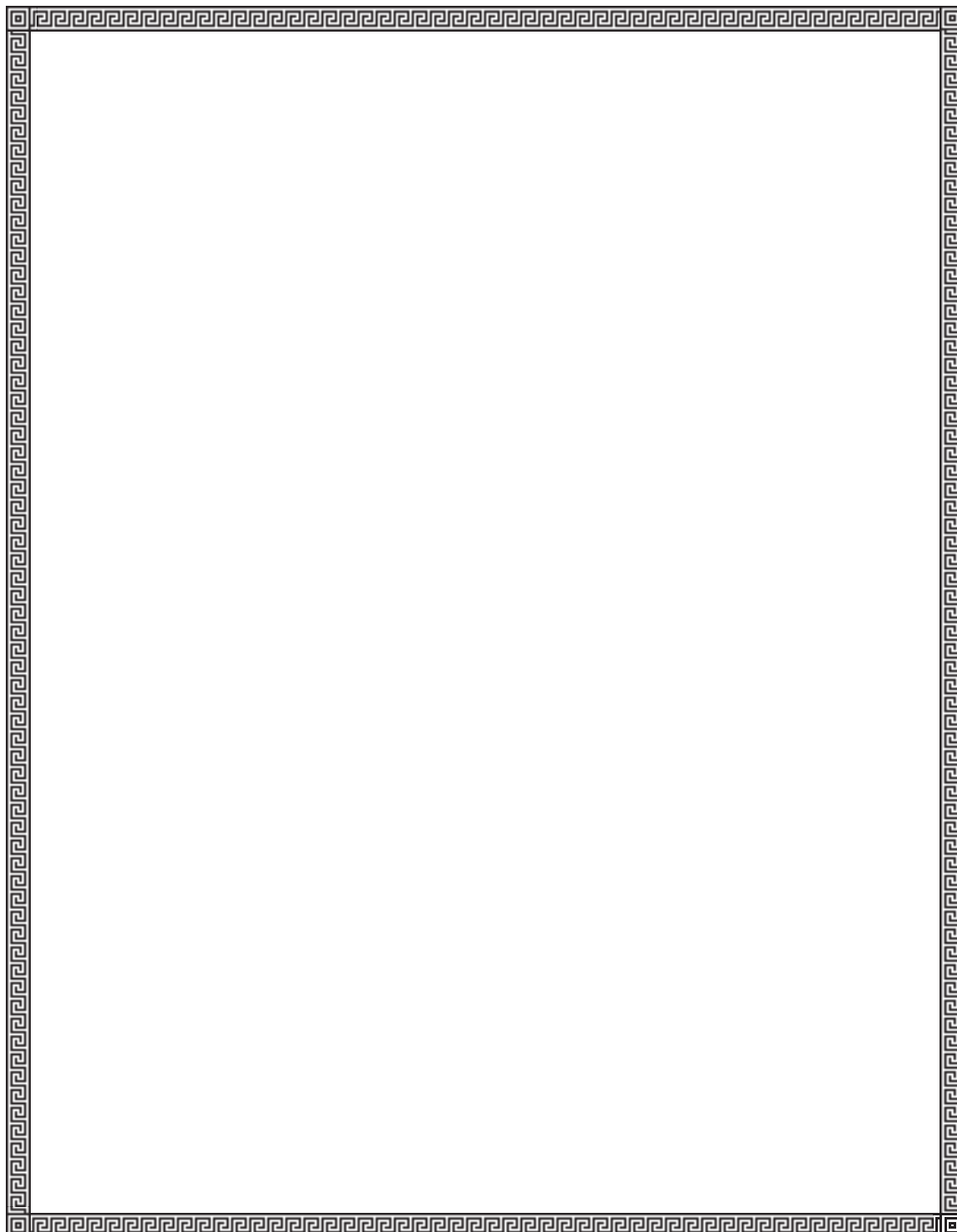
Which of your parents is in the Army? _____

Finish this picture to look like YOU!!!



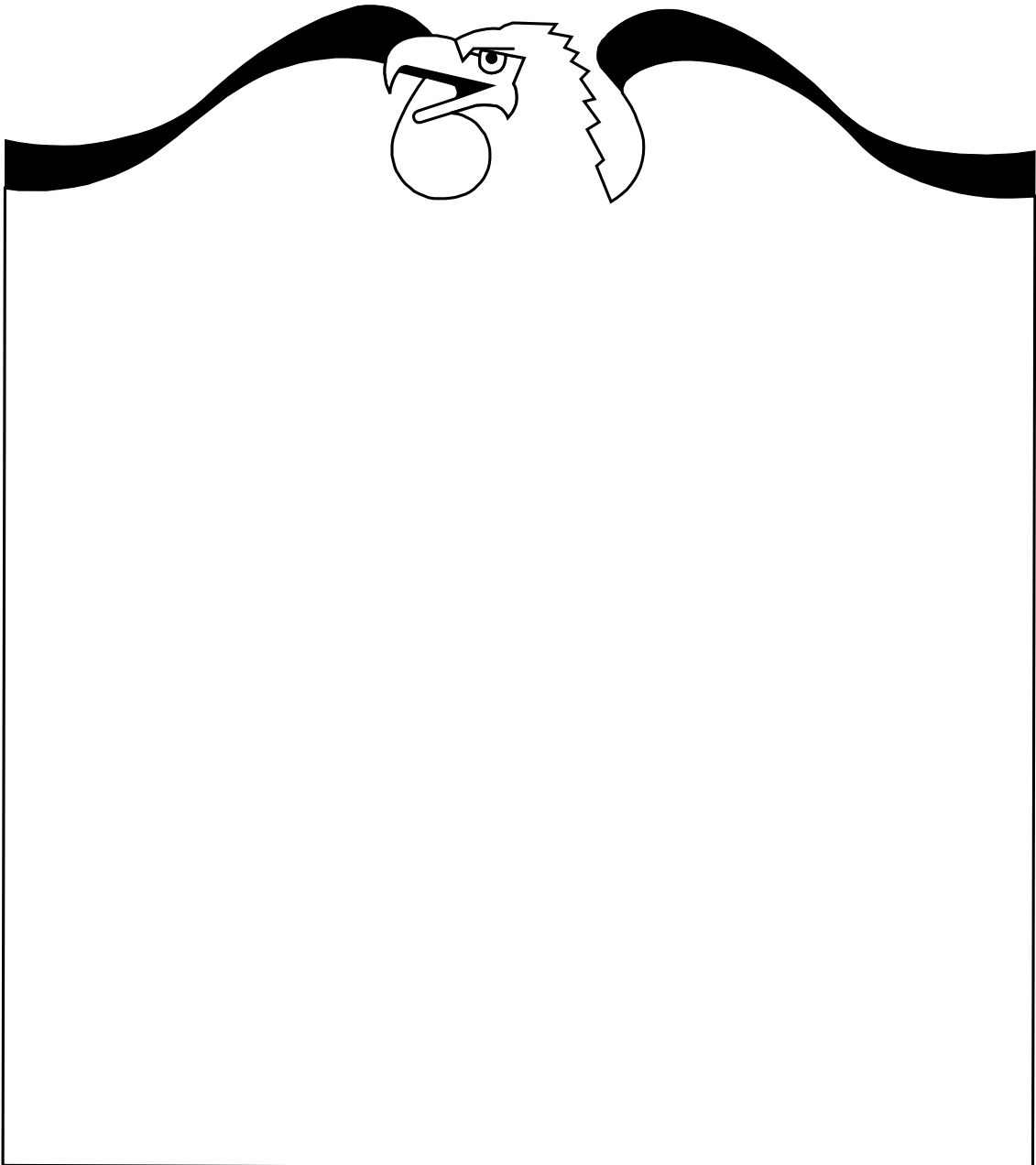


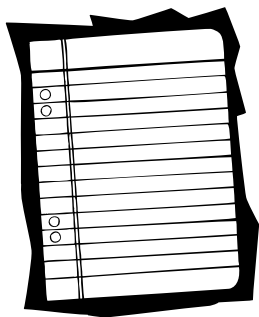
Draw, Color, or Paste a Picture of Your
Army Family Here.



Ask your Mom or Dad About Their Army Job

Make a picture of your Mom or Dad doing their Army job. Draw or color the picture, cut out pictures from magazines, or get a photo of your Mom or Dad at work.





Note for Grown-ups:

The school age child's ability to cope with change in routine is improving, but it is still important to keep things as 'regular' as possible when a parent is on a deployment. The number one way to help children do well during a parent's absence is to talk to them. Talk about where the parent is going and when he or she will return. Talk to children about the changes they may experience, and how you will deal with them together. Talk about their thoughts and feelings about the parent's deployment. Talk about how you feel too.

Children who are less than 10 or 11 years old still primarily learn and understand by using their senses, working with concrete objects. There are a number of activities here that kids can use to help them deal with the deployment. Use a calendar to mark the passage of time. M&M jars are useful, too. Maps help them visualize where their parent has gone.

Whenever possible children want to know about the places where their parents work. They are learning about other cultures and countries in school, and are often quite interested in the language, dress, houses, weather, and time changes at the parent's deployment location. When it is possible to identify where the parent is going, help children 'look up' or 'study' the location. Information about the deployment location can help children feel closer to the absent parent.

Kids are smart and understanding. Tell children if security requires that the family can't be told where a parent has gone. Explain that you would talk about where their Mom or Dad is if it was possible. Again emphasize how special and important their parent's job is, and tell children that keeping the deployment location secret is a very important part of that special job. "Dad's job as a _____ is very important. He'd like to tell us where he is going, but it has to be a secret so that Dad and the other soldiers he works with can do the best job they can."

If possible have the departing parent spend some special time alone with the child before he or she leaves: go out for an ice cream, play catch at the park, or rent and watch a favorite video together. If this isn't possible, talk to the child about planning how they will spend special time with Mom or Dad after the parent's return.

School age children learn and grow at an amazing rate. A parent's deployment can provide many opportunities for growth and development. Writing in a journal and reading and writing mail and email are opportunities for children to expand language skills. Assign one appropriate additional household task or chore for each child to master during the parent's absence to improve self-esteem and responsibility.

Keep the absent parent aware of the child's accomplishments. Send schoolwork and art projects to the deployed parent whenever possible, emphasizing success and growth.

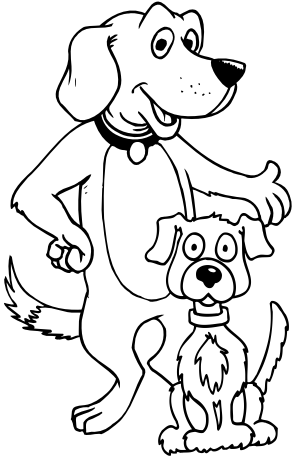
Encourage children to report on their accomplishments in letters and other contacts. Report physical growth and accomplishments, too.



Before Your Mom or Dad Goes Away

Get the facts

Most kids feel better when they know about their Mom or Dad's Army trip and what's going to happen while their Mom or Dad is away.



Talk to a grown-up or an older brother or sister about your Mom or Dad's trip. Ask if you can have a Family meeting to talk about what happens when your Mom or Dad is gone.

Write a list of the questions you want to ask a grown-up about the Army trip, and about what will happen when your Mom or Dad is away. You can ask a grown-up, older Friend or brother or sister to help you write down all the things you want to know. Write down the answers too!

My Fact Sheet

Questions

Answers



Where Is Your Mom or Dad Going?

Where's your Mom or Dad going? Get a map and mark the place with a big 'X'.

Ask your Mom or Dad, teacher, or older brother or sister to help you read about the place your Mom or Dad is going. You can look in a book or Encyclopedia, or on the Internet.

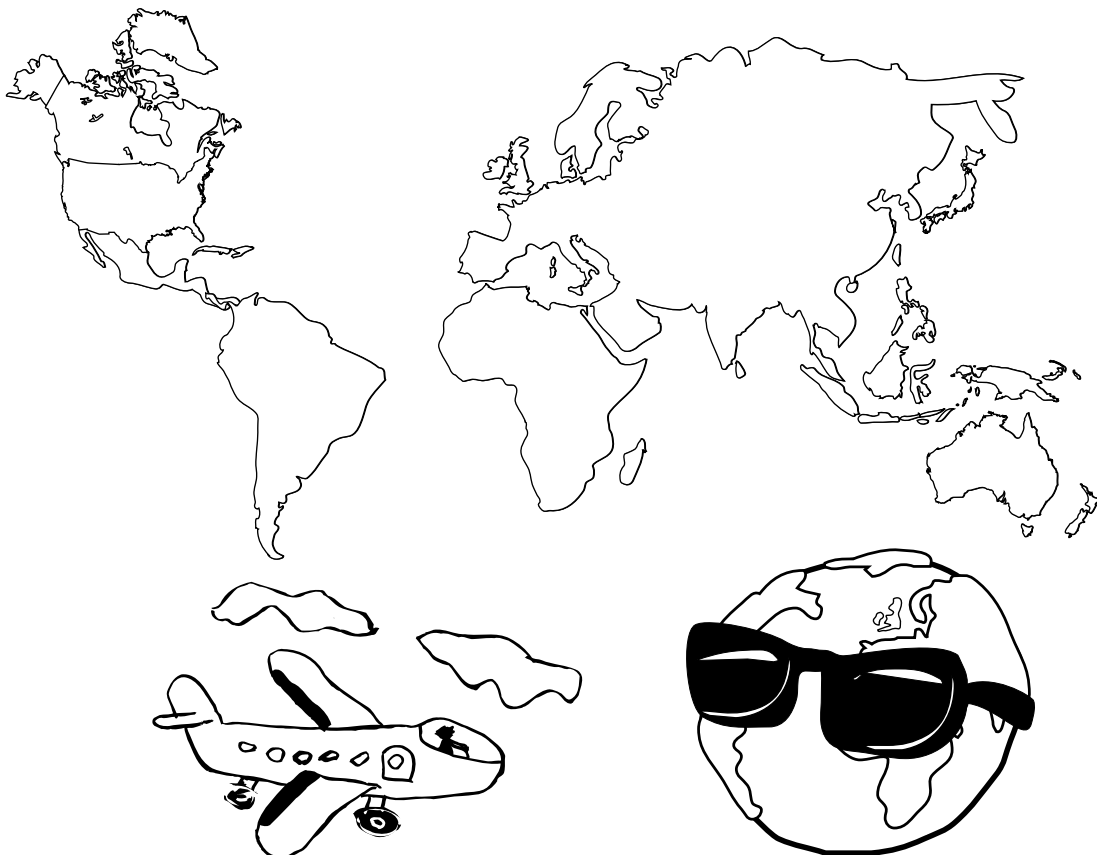
See if you can find the answers to these questions:

What's the name of the place your Mom or Dad is going to? _____

What is different where your Mom or Dad is going: do they speak a different language or dress in different clothes or eat different food? _____

Will the weather be hotter or colder, or is it like the weather where you live? _____

Sometimes your Mom or Dad can't tell you where they're going because it's special Army Information. Just remember, they'll let you know what's happening whenever they can.



When?

Use a calendar like this to keep track of when your Mom or Dad is going away, to mark off the days while your Mom or Dad is gone, and to circle the day your Mom or Dad is coming home.

[illegible]



A Trip Information Sheet

Here is a Trip Sheet you can fill out with lots of information about your Mom or Dad's Army trip.

Trip Information Sheet

Who is going? _____

When and for how long? _____

Where? _____

Why? _____

Who else is going? _____

Other stuff about the trip: _____

Spend Special Time Together

Circle what you like to do when you spend special time with your Mom or Dad

Eat



Go for a



ride

Have a



Play

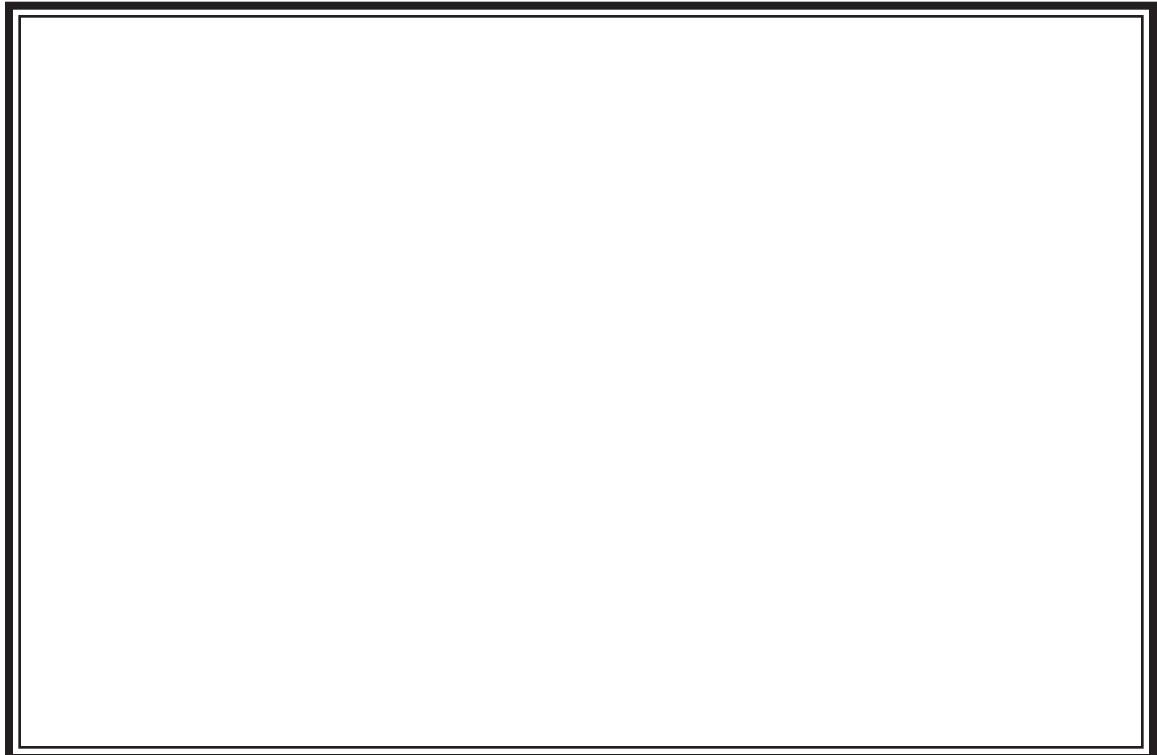


See a



at the zoo

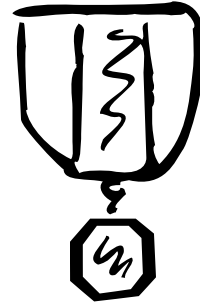
Draw, color or paste a picture of how you'd like to spend special time with your Family or alone with your Mom or Dad before they go on their Army trip.



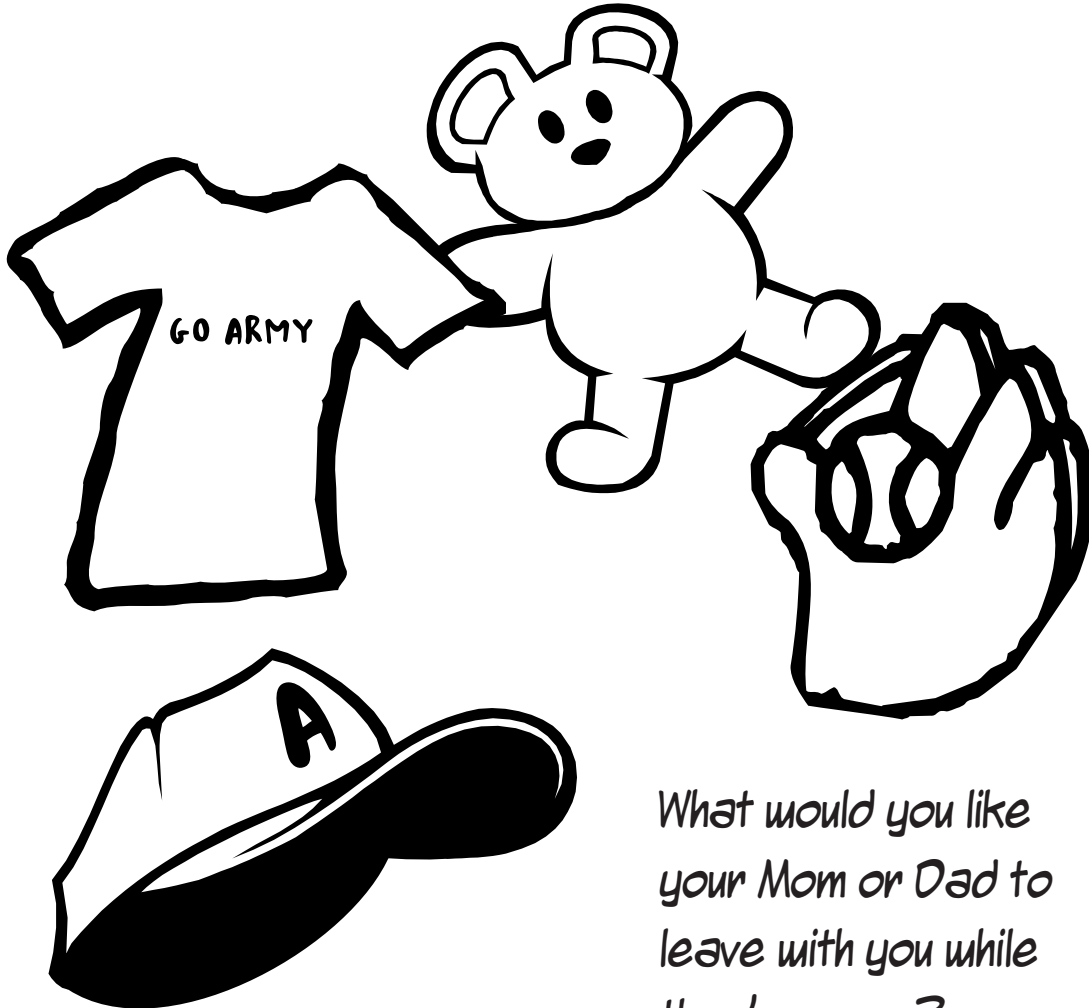


Trade Special Things: Something from your Mom or Dad

Ask your parent to loan you something special to keep while they're away. Some Moms or Dads share one of their medals or ribbons. Other kids sleep on their Mom or Dad's pillow or wear their Mom or Dad's T-shirt to bed at night. Some kids keep a special note from their Mom or Dad next to their beds, on their walls, or under their pillows. Pictures of your Mom or Dad are good too.



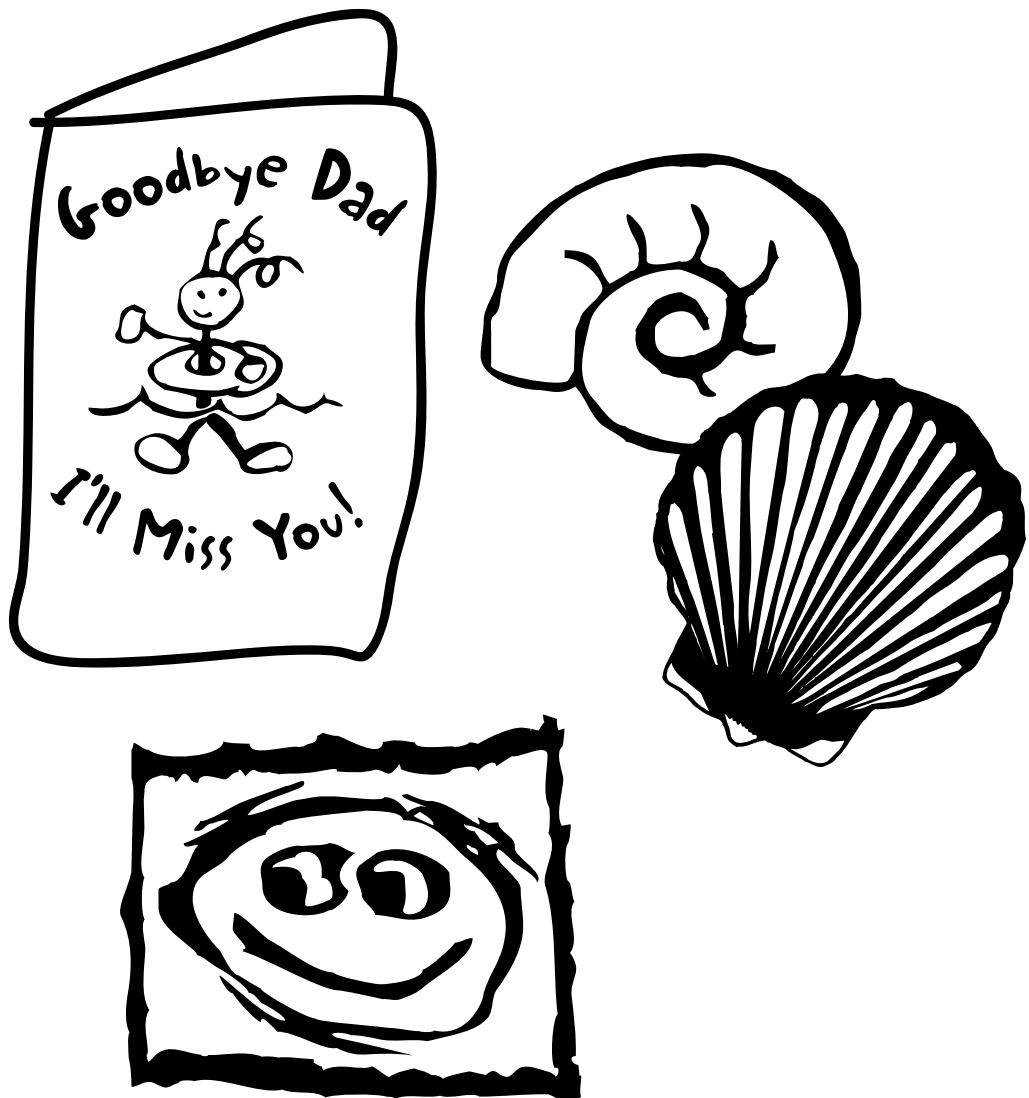
Here are some of the things soldiers leave with their kids when they go away. Tell your Mom or Dad that you'll take real good care of their special item until they get home.



What would you like
your Mom or Dad to
leave with you while
they're gone?

Make Something Special for Your Mom or Dad

Give your parent something special from you to take on their Army trip. It might be a shell or pretty rock you collected at the beach or park, or a picture you drew just for them.

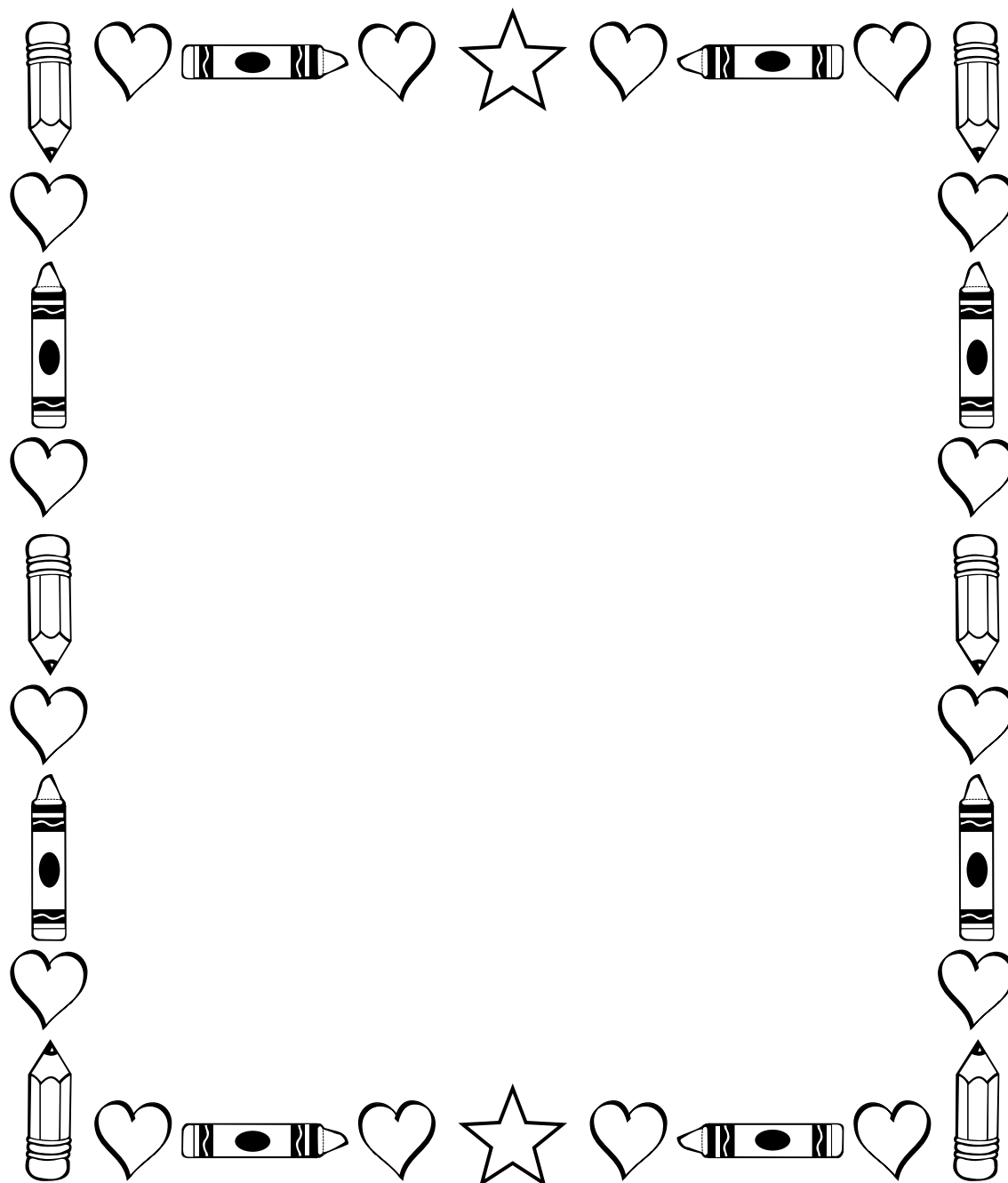




Goodbye-for-Now

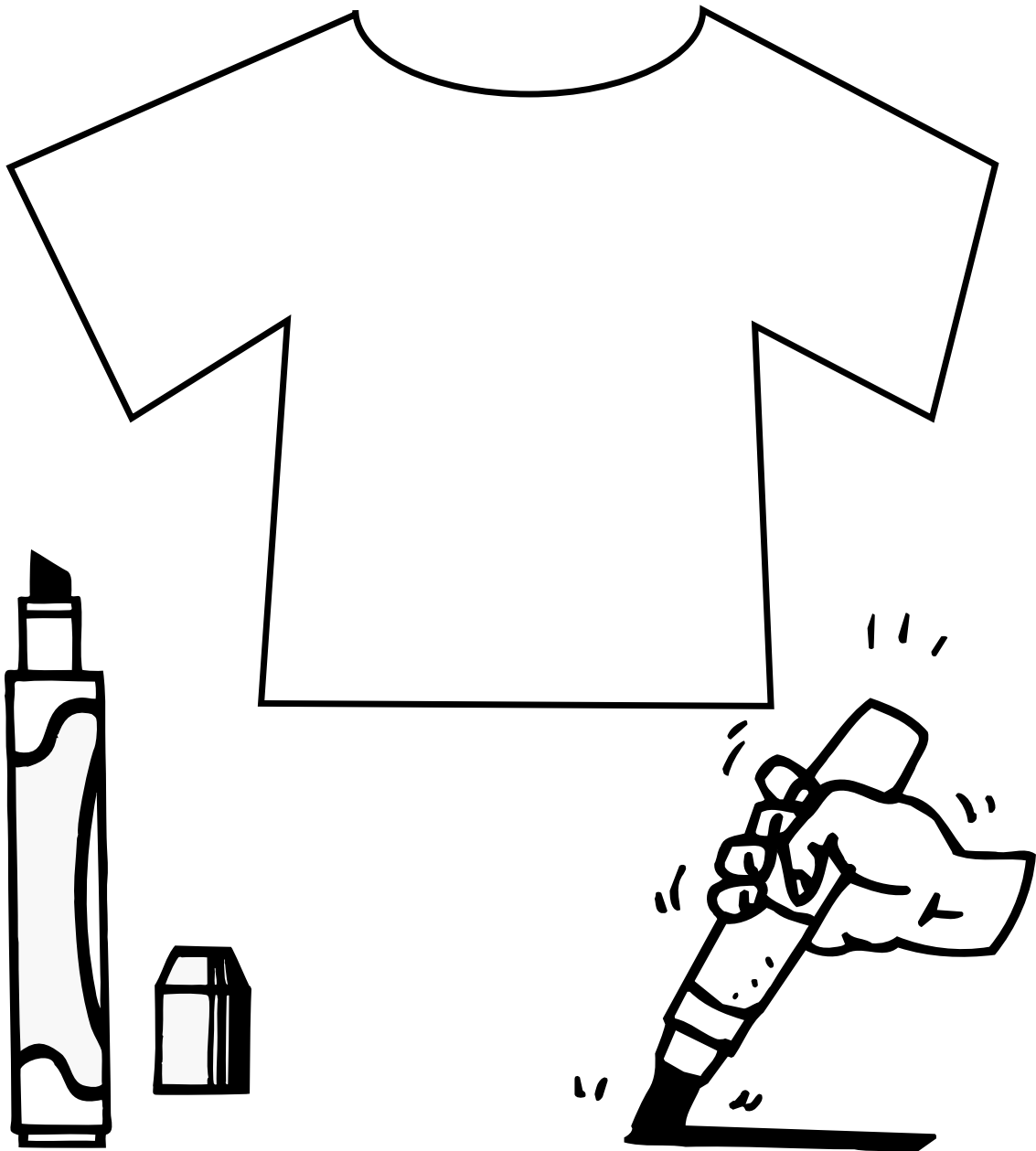
Make a Goodbye-For-Now picture For your Mom or Dad to take with them.

Write a Goodbye-For-Now note, or put another picture, on the back.



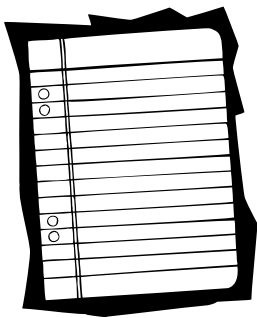
Tee Shirt Project

Use permanent markers or Fabric markers to decorate a plain white t-shirt For your Mom or Dad to take with them.





Note for Grown-ups:



Children of any age experience many conflicting emotions when a parent is getting ready to leave, or is gone.

When things change at home, school age children who have become more mature and independent in many ways may revert to younger behaviors, like thumb-sucking, wanting to sleep with Mom, or being afraid of situations which they could previously deal

with more easily. Recognize your child's need for familiar, comfortable actions of their 'younger days' while encouraging them to use the more 'grown-up' skills they have developed.

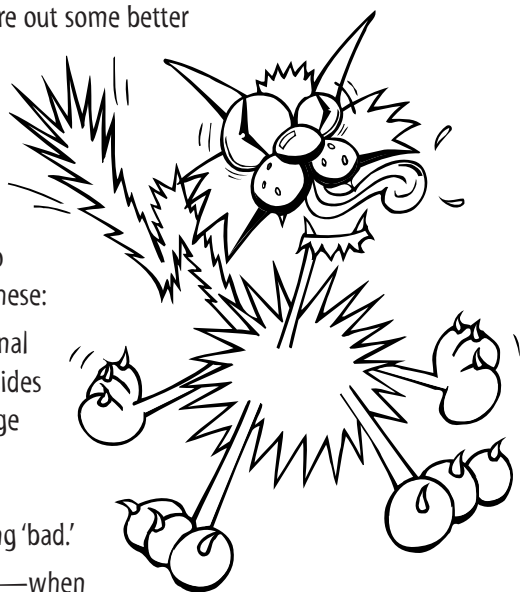
Remember, any feelings your child has are okay. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Tell your child that all of his/her feelings are accepted, including negative ones like anger and frustration. It is not necessary to hide your feelings or 'put on a happy face' all the time with your child. Sharing your feelings with a child helps the child learn to understand and empathize with others and to understand and cope with his or her own feelings as well.

Encourage your child to channel unacceptable ways of expressing his/her feelings into acceptable actions. For some children a hug may be all that's needed. Children can often 'work off' their negative or intense emotions through activity: running, climbing, bike riding, etc. Writing about feelings, drawing them, or talking about them also helps kids cope with their feelings.

Make sure your child understands that the feeling is accepted, even when his/her behavior is not. "I know you're feeling angry because Mom is gone and it's okay to be mad; but I won't let you hit or kick. Let's figure out some better ways of being angry. What about running around the park real fast while I push your sister on the swing. I bet that'll get some of the mad feelings out."

Stress: Stress, and the physical and emotional feelings that accompany stress, is not just a 'grown-up' experience. Children get stressed and can be encouraged to engage in age appropriate stress managing activities like these:

1. Practice relaxation techniques with stressed, over-emotional children. Sit with the children with legs crossed, arms at sides and eyes closed (or lie quietly on a soft surface). Encourage the children to go limp and 'floppy like cooked spaghetti', breathe slowly, and think about something quiet or calm. Encourage children to use relaxation when they are feeling 'bad.'
2. Encourage children to exercise—run, ride, swim or climb—when they feel 'bad' or stressed.



Your Feelings

You can have lots of different Feelings before and after your Mom or Dad goes away. Talk to an older brother or sister or a grown-up about how you Feel. You may Feel bad, good, weird or confused. You can have more than one Feeling at the same time.

Hidden in this puzzle are words for some of the Feelings kids have when their parent has to go away. Circle the Feeling words. What Feelings do you have about your Mom or Dad leaving? Color in the circles around the words for the way YOU Feel.

K	L	D	I	M	X	O	Q	Y	Y	L	M
M	A	O	E	L	A	R	P	O	H	P	W
B	N	A	N	H	R	P	R	B	C	F	D
R	D	U	Y	E	A	A	E	P	U	A	J
P	J	F	W	H	L	D	V	W	O	A	S
H	X	M	N	P	D	Y	F	J	R	S	O
Y	S	U	J	R	K	C	Y	D	G	Y	C
W	O	R	R	I	E	D	F	K	S	Q	H
X	S	X	F	J	X	K	U	R	C	A	X
D	U	O	R	P	Q	C	N	J	P	I	D
X	R	C	X	W	J	I	N	P	M	A	D
P	B	U	V	U	V	S	Y	K	M	X	W

BAD

PROUD

SICK

WORRIED

GROUCHY

ICKY

MAD

SAD

UNHAPPY

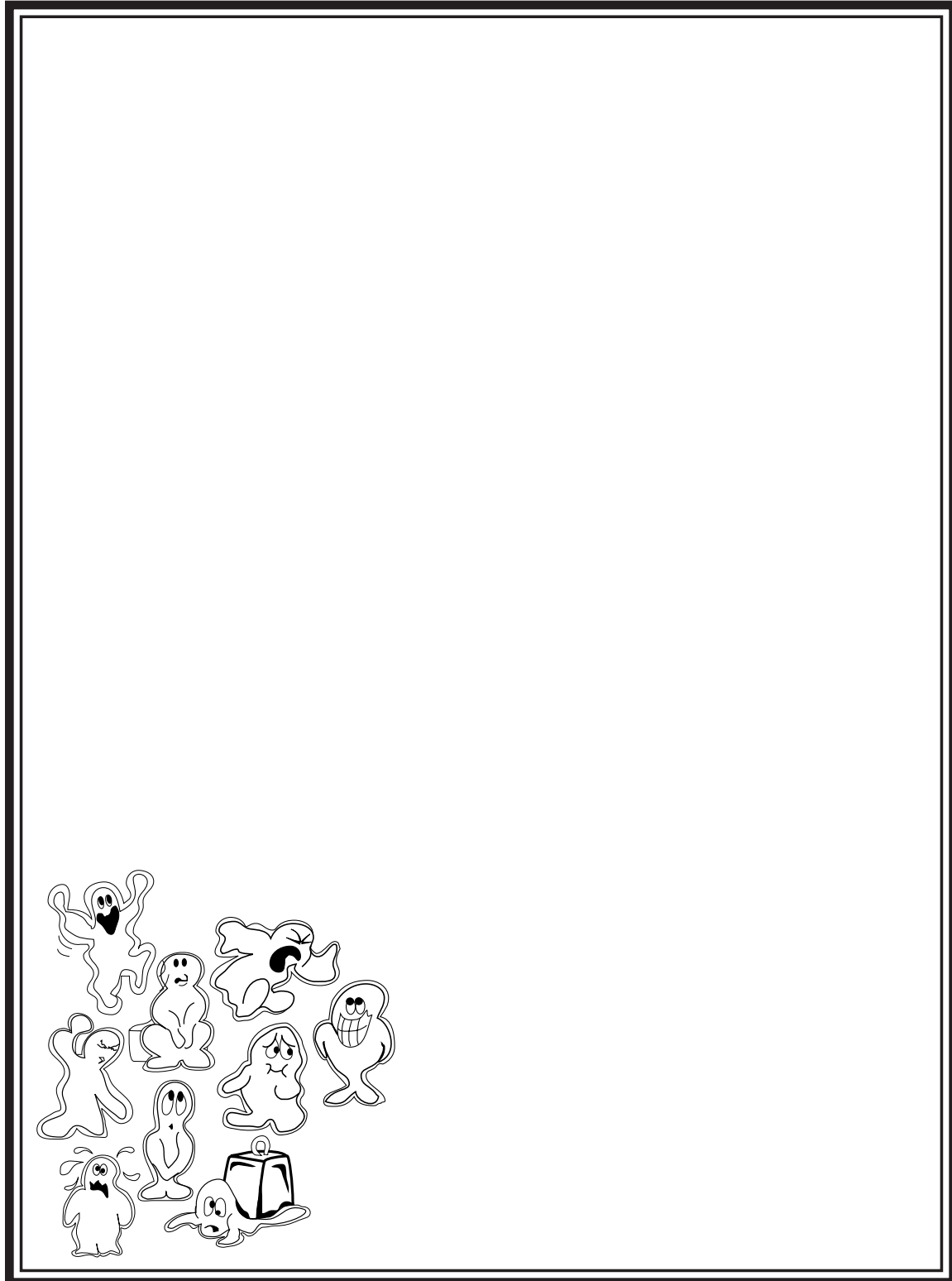
FUNNY

HAPPY

LONELY



Draw, Color, or Write About How You Feel

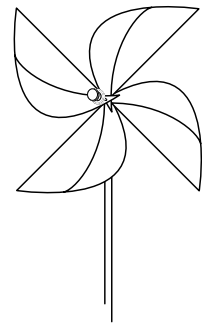
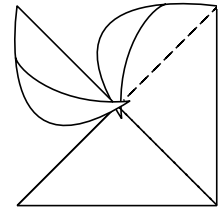
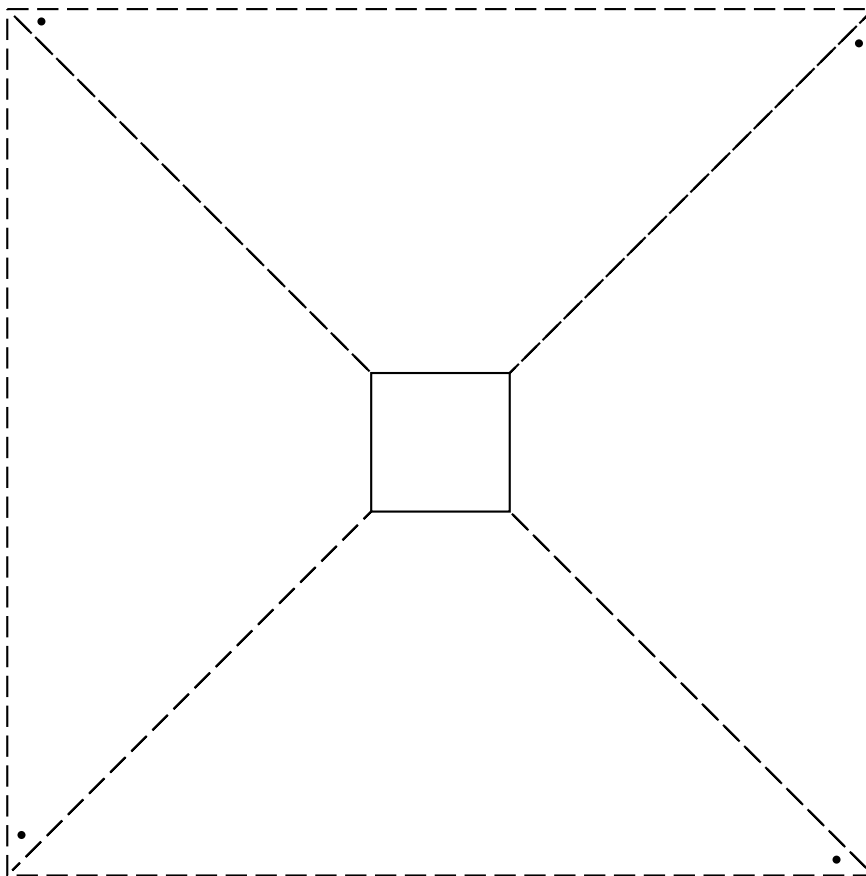


When Things Are Getting To You

There are lots of things you can do when you feel bad or weird.

Take big breaths

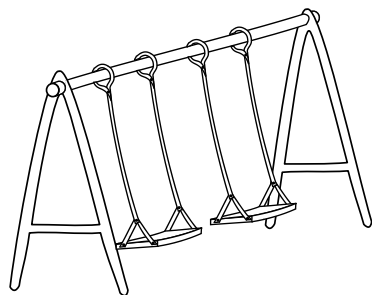
Taking big breaths can help you feel better when you're feeling bad. One good way to take big breaths is by blowing on a pinwheel. Use this pattern to make your own pinwheel. Blow on it when you feel yucky.



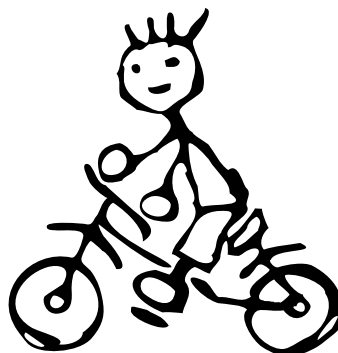


Do Something Fun When You Feel Bad

What Fun things can you do when you feel yucky?



swing



go for a bike ride



write about your feelings



run



draw or color how you feel

Talk to Someone

Here are some people you can talk to. Circle or color the people you can talk to.



Coach



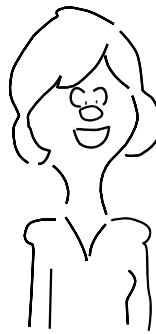
Youth Leader



Friend



Grandparent



Minister



Parent

Who else do you like to talk to? _____

Draw a person you like to talk to.



Help Your 'Stay-home' Parent Feel Better

Sometimes your Mom or Dad or Grandparent who is taking care of you feels sad or bad too. Unscramble the words to see some ways Matt cheers up his Mom when his Dad is gone.

Mksea her lcnhu

Signs a sgon

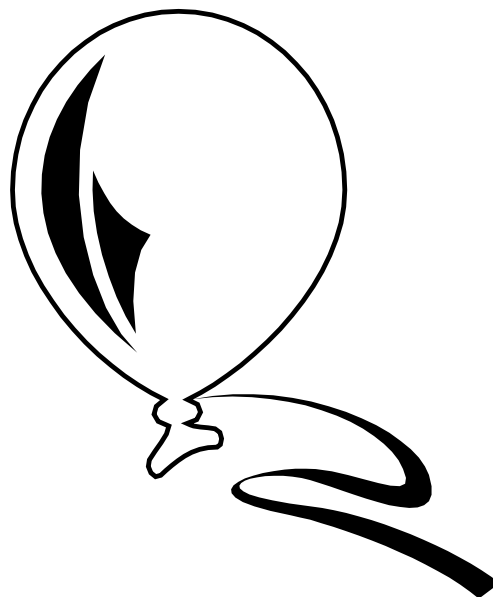
Tlles jeosk

Plays qyeluti so she can take a npa

Bginr her frwselo

Ties a bllonao to her chair

Maesk her some cokeiso

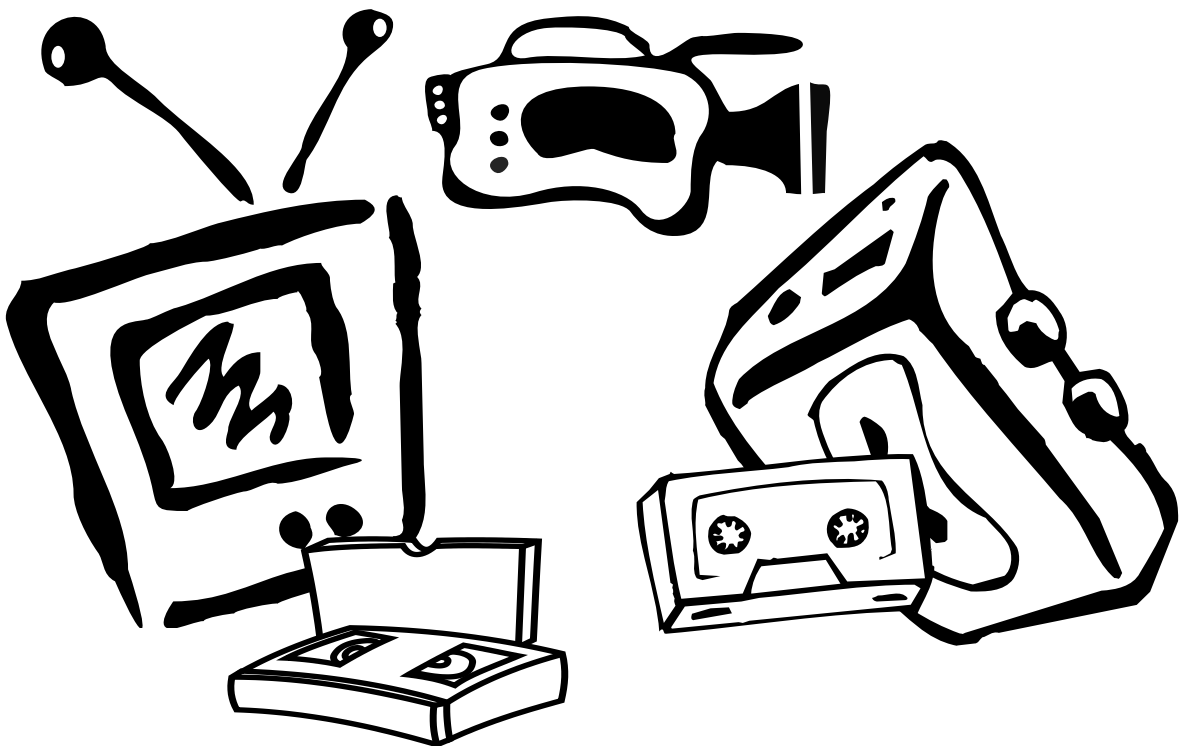
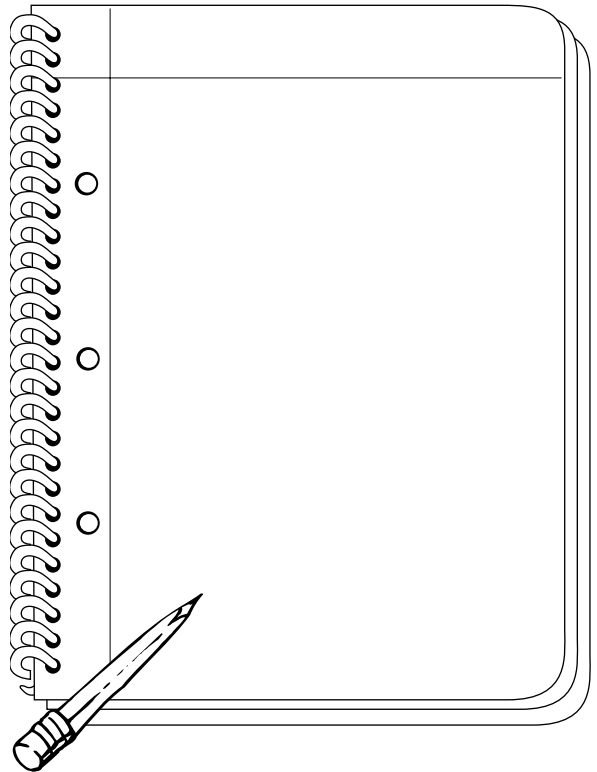


Note for Grown-ups:

Staying in touch is one of the most important things children and parents do when Mom or Dad is deployed. Computers, instant messaging, email, and video conferencing are some of the new ways that families stay in touch. But most parents and children still think that getting packages or letters in the mail is very special.

Here are some activities that many school age children have found fun and helpful for staying in contact with an absent parent. At this age children's writing skills are just emerging, and many children may be more comfortable and more able to express themselves through drawing other artwork rather than by writing letters. Endorse all forms of creative contact.

Encourage children to share their growth and accomplishments with their Mom or Dad through letters or other contacts. Keep contacts with the absent parent as positive as possible. Don't just use contacts to tell the absent parent about Junior's naughty behavior or missing school assignments.





While Your Mom or Dad Is Away

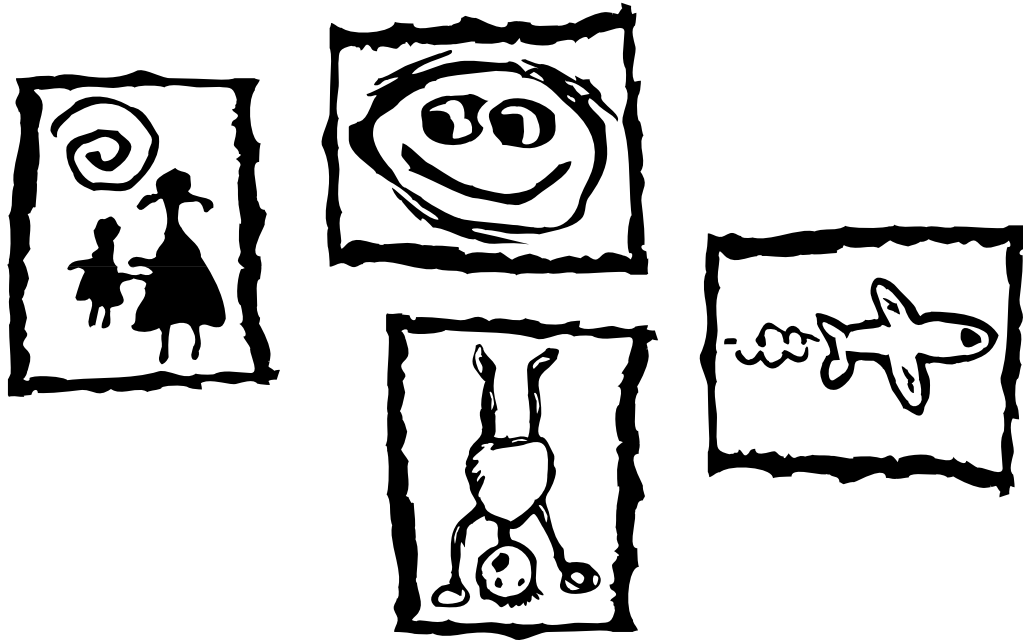
Stay close to your Mom or Dad while they're away by making a trip collection.

Make a treasure box,

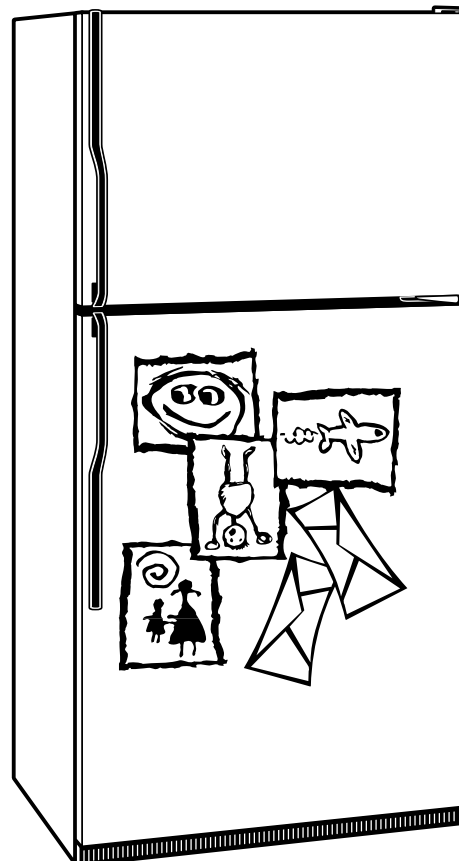
A scrap book,



Or have a poster or special place on a wall where you can keep maps, letters, and other stuff during your Mom or Dad's trip.



Or stick things on your refrigerator.





Trip Collection

Make a label for your trip collection. Use the sample below or make your own.

WHO _____

WENT WHERE _____

WHEN _____

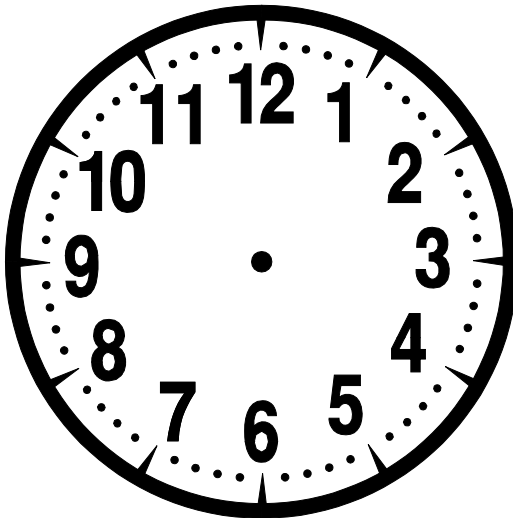
What kinds of things would you like to put in your trip collection when your Dad or Mom is away?

What is my Mom or Dad doing now?

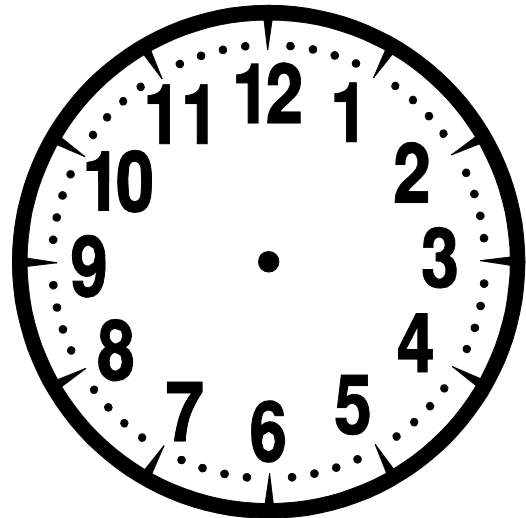
Your Mom or Dad may be in a different time zone. This means that when it is 7 o'clock in the morning and you are going to school, your Mom or Dad may be eating lunch, or just getting to bed.

Make clocks that show you what your Mom or Dad is doing when you are having breakfast, getting out of school, or going to bed. Use the clocks below or copy them on another piece of paper. A grownup can help you figure out what your Mom or Dad is doing when you are getting up, eating lunch or at other times. You can put them on a wall or on your trip collection or trip poster.

My Time



Mom or Dad's Time

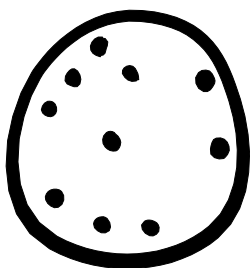




Send Mail

You and your Mom or Dad can stay close by sending things to each other.

Here are some things that kids and parents send to each other. Circle the things you'd like to send to your Mom or Dad.



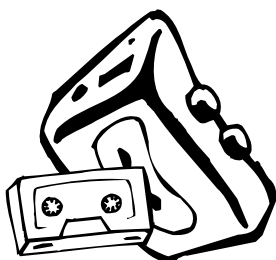
Cookies



Drawings



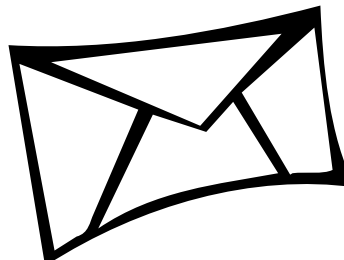
Candy



Tapes



School Papers



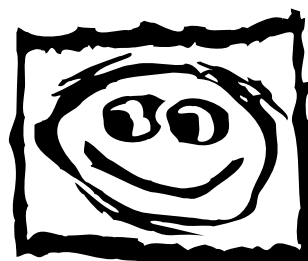
Letters



Cards



News Clippings



Photos

Write down your thoughts and feelings

During the week write down the important and special things you'd like to tell your Mom or Dad. You can look at the list to remember what you want to tell your Mom or Dad when you write or talk to them.

Keep a journal

Write and draw about what you're doing at home and school, how you feel, about people you meet, work or play with, and whatever else you want to say. There are some starter journal pages at the end of this book, or you can staple some writing paper together or use a notebook. Writing things in a journal can help you understand them, and can be a way of remembering some important things you want to say or write to your Mom or Dad.





A quick letter

Sometimes it's hard to think of what to say to your Mom or Dad. Here's a QUICK LETTER to send. On the back you can draw a picture about your week or paste magazine pictures that tell about your week.

My Week

Dear _____

This is what happened to me this week:

I did this new thing: _____

I had this great meal: _____

This Funny thing happened: _____

I miss you!!!

I love you,

Good Times Cards

Good Times Cards are a cool, quick way to tell each other about important things that happen while your Mom or Dad is away. Here is a good times card you can cut out or copy. Keep some to send to your Mom or Dad and give them some to send to you, too!!!





Send a puzzle letter to your Mom or Dad

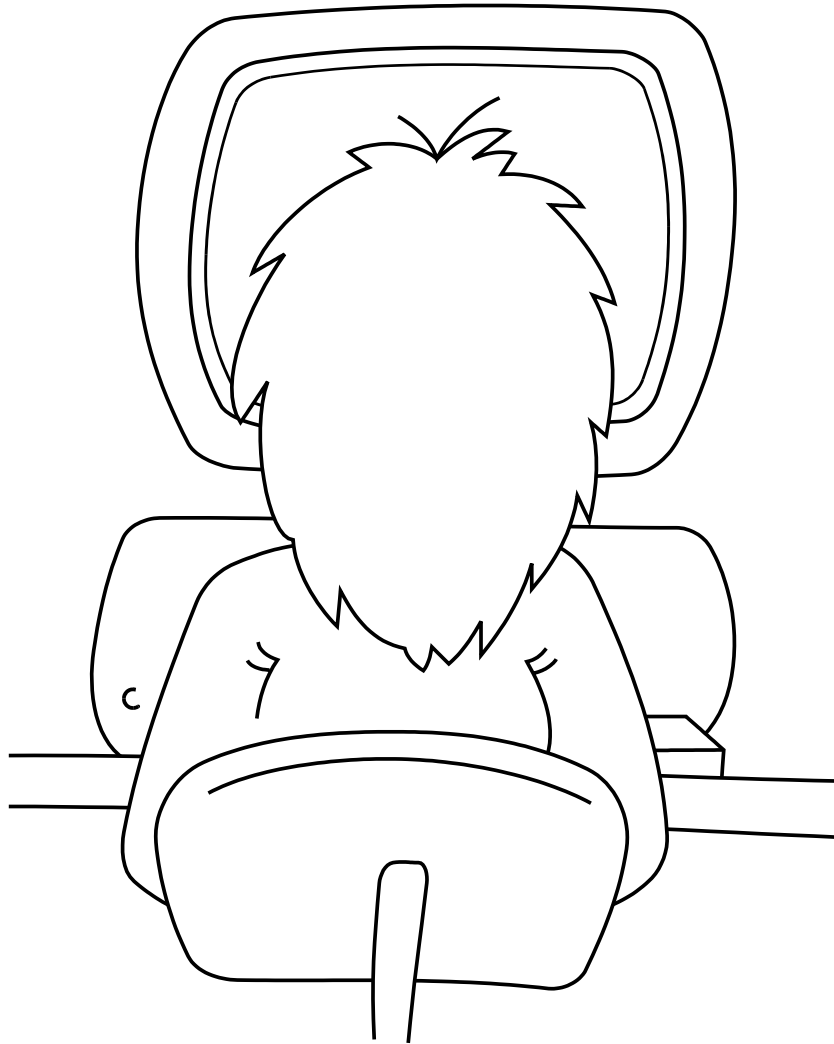
Use this page or make your own paper with lines like this. Draw or color a picture For your Mom or Dad, then write a note on the other side if you want. When the picture is Finished cut it into squares on the lines. Put all the pieces in an envelope and send it to your Mom or Dad. They get to put the puzzle together so they can see the picture or read the letter.

Use a computer

Sometimes your Mom or Dad will be able to use a computer to keep in touch with you when they are away.

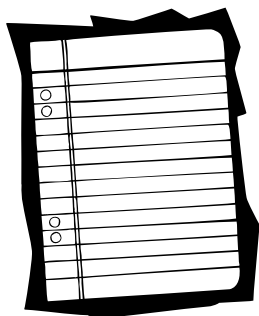
Ask your Mom or Dad to help you get your own EMAIL address so you can use a computer to email your Mom or Dad From a computer at home or on post.

Or use a Free "instant message" program like, AOL instant messenger or MSN messenger, to talk to your parent on the computer. Ask your parent or a teacher, youth counselor, or librarian to help you get started.





Note for Grown-ups:



Many parents tell us that homecoming and reunion are exceptionally difficult for children, often harder than preparing for or getting through the deployment. Once again schedules are disrupted, expectations change, and emotions run high.

Children may experience emotional reactions that range from excitement to fear to depression. Children, and returning parents as well, may feel out of place or shy. Remind the child that he or she may be happy and excited, but also feel funny or scared. Talk to your child about his or her feelings about homecoming. Remind the child that any way he or she feels is OKAY.

Involve your child in getting ready for the absent parent's return, for example by planning a welcome home party or dinner, or making a 'Welcome Home' banner or decorations.

Be honest with the child. Explain that the returning parent may be very tired, that the homecoming may be different than they imagine, that everyone may need to take some time to get used to each other again.

Most of all, be aware that in addition to being a happy, exciting time, homecoming and the days that follow can be stressful and require additional adjustment for all family members. Take it slow and enjoy being together again!

W
e
L
C
O
M
e

H
O
M
e



Homecoming

It's time For your Mom or Dad to come home.

Talk about your Feelings.

Kids can Feel scared, happy, excited, confused, or all of these at the same time when their Mom or Dad is coming home after being away For a while.

Here are some worries kids have when their Mom or Dad comes home.

Will they like being home?

Will they have changed a lot?

Will they still want to do Fun things with me?

Will they be mad 'cause I wasn't good all the time?

Will we still get along with each other?

I've changed. Will they still like me?

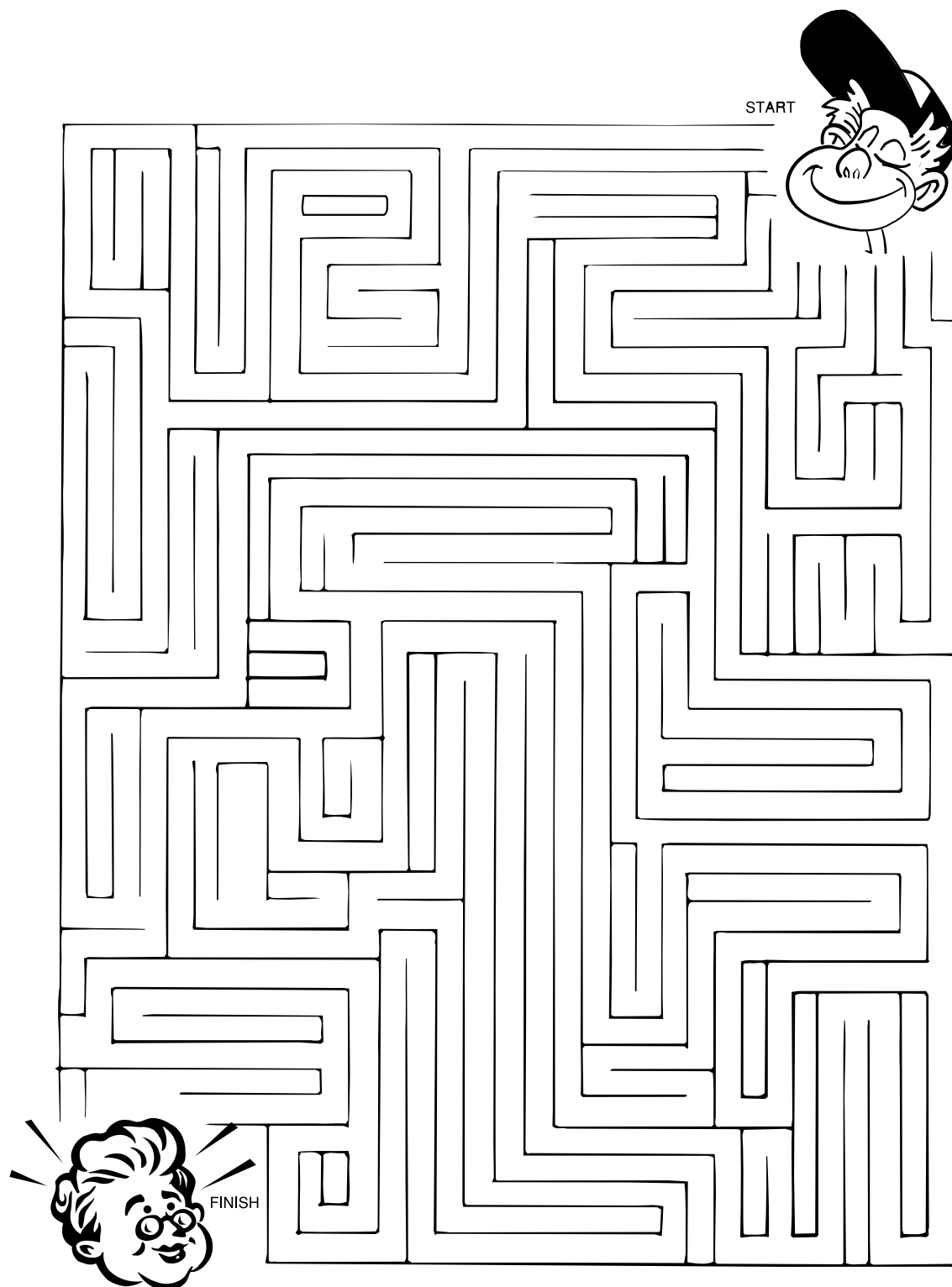
Will there be more Family rules?

Talk to someone you trust
about your Feelings.





Kim likes to talk to his Grandma when he Feels Funny about his Dad's homecoming. But the water company is working in the neighborhood and lots of streets are blocked by pipes. Can you help Kim get to his Grandma's house?





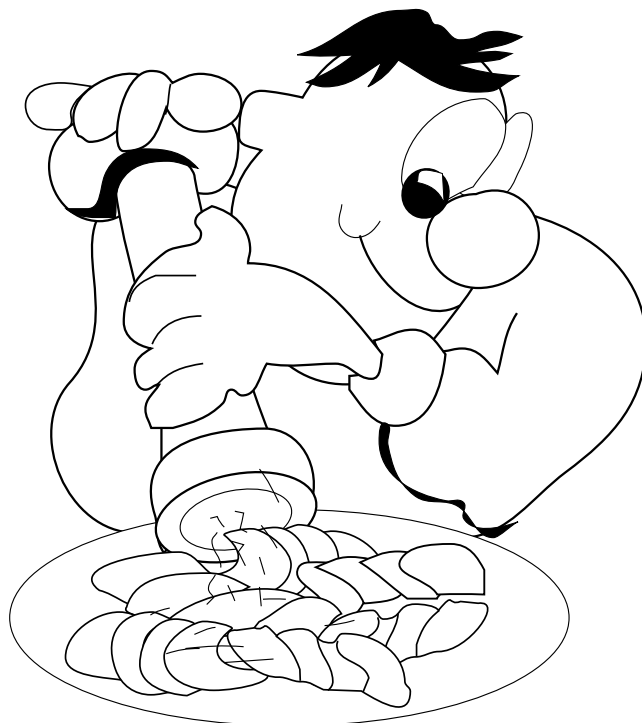
Get ready

Plan a special homecoming dinner or party.

Make a banner that says "Welcome Home" by taping papers together into a long line or using white wrapping paper off a roll. Have everyone in the family help decorate the banner.

Make a special "Welcome Home" card for your Mom or Dad.

Help clean up the house or make a special dinner.





After your Mom or Dad gets home, what can you do?

Give your Mom or Dad time to rest and time to be alone after they get home.

Give your parents time to be together.

Take it slow. You all have changed. It takes time to get used to being together again.

Show your Mom or Dad you are proud of them.


Don't worry if your Mom or Dad is tired or grumpy.

*Then just take it slow and enjoy being a **WHOLE FAMILY** again!!!*



My Personal Journal



 My Army Family _____

My Personal Journal

My Personal Journal

