

## **Mother's Day –Top Tips**

In the UK, Mother's Day traditionally falls three weeks before Easter Sunday. It is an occasion to thank Mums for their love, care and support throughout the year.

Mother's Day is celebrated in over 40 countries. Although there may be cultural variations, mothers are usually honoured with flowers, cards, gifts and special gestures of attention. Dads may cook, clean and look after the children, allowing mums to relax and enjoy the day as a special 'Thank you'.



### **Mother's Day origins**

Mother's Day can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians, who held an annual festival to honour the goddess Isis, the 'Mother of the pharaohs'. In Rome and many other societies, honey cakes were eaten and flowers were given in honour of the 'Great Mother' goddess Cybele.

With the development of Christianity, people honoured the Virgin Mary by returning to the church in which they were baptized on the fourth Sunday in Lent. In the late 15th century, the practice became 'Mothering Sunday'. It was later widened to enable working mothers to be reunited with their families. The tradition of celebrating motherhood eventually blossomed into what we now know as 'Mother's Day'.

Here are a few ideas that can make Mother's Day enjoyable for Mums, and the whole family.

### **Planning**

To ensure that the occasion is an enjoyable and memorable one, planning and preparation are vital. According to retailers, Mother's Day is the second busiest period after Christmas, so allow plenty of time for shopping. Mother's Day is also a busy time for amusement parks and restaurants and advance booking is therefore essential. Long distance calls also peak on Mother's Day, so keep the telephone handy.

### **Breakfast in bed**

Start Mum's day with breakfast in bed served with a bunch of spring flowers. Smiley pancakes, heart-shaped toast, or a slice of Simnel cake, accompanied by a cup of tea, her favourite book or magazine will give Mum the chance to relax, or maybe open her cards and gifts.

Babies and toddlers won't feel left out if they have their own pretend food, dishes and cups. Besides being good fun, pretend play develops imagination and it encourages problem-solving and exploratory skills. Young children will happily fill up the dishes with food, match lids to pots and pretend to feed their teddy bears. They may even end up feeding Mum while she relaxes in bed.

## **Household Chores**

On Mother's Day, the whole family can help with the chores. Young children love dusting, but if Dad tickles them with a feather duster, it is even more fun. Mums will appreciate the quality time that Dad spends with the family, even if he does things his own way.

Junior chefs may be able to prepare a meal and wash up the dishes, but leave the knives and glasses for Dad to clean. Babies can help by sorting out the measuring cups, pots, pans and spoons. If it turns into a noisy musical activity, Dads are going to want to join in.

School-age children may be ready for more difficult chores under Dad's supervision. Having a 'job card' can motivate them and if they are praised for being so helpful, they will want to help again. This gives the family more time to play and have fun together.

Giving Mum the day off will show her how special she is. Whether it involves emptying the washing machine, putting away toys, preparing lunch boxes for school the next day, brushing teeth, making the beds or doing homework without being asked, Mum will enjoy the break. It will also give the children the chance to model adult behaviour, which is good for their development, and it will give the whole family more time to have fun together.

## **Gifts**

It is traditional to thank Mums for their love and care with a gift. There is nothing that mums like more than a creation that has been lovingly made. This could be a paper bracelet decorated with hearts and flowers, dried lavender or soap wrapped in muslin and tied with a ribbon, a family photograph in a homemade frame, a friendship bracelet or a hand decorated mug that Mum can use everyday. Young children will be inspired to try out some creative, imaginative ideas and mums will feel loved and valued. When the children see Mum smiling, they will know that their efforts have been worthwhile.

Helium balloons that float out of a box filled with paper and ribbons make an original gift on Mother's Day. The box, and its contents, will keep babies and young children happily entertained for hours. When the box is transformed into a pirate ship, a train or a robot costume, Mum and Dad get to see the world from their child's point of view.

## **Voucher**

Mum may like a gift card so that she can select the perfume or jewellery that she wants. However, a 'help' voucher, which includes promises to wash up on Monday, a foot rub on Tuesday, setting the table on Wednesday, or good behaviour all week, will be appreciated even more.

## **Flowers**

In the UK, a bunch of spring flowers, violets, carnations or roses are traditional Mother's Day gifts. Other popular flowers include orchids, which come in different colours, shapes and sizes. Alternatively, a bouquet of paper or tissue flowers will encourage the children to try out their creative skills and provide a lasting reminder of the occasion. Whichever flowers or plants Mum receives, she is sure to love them.

For an unforgettable experience, take Mum to a romantic flower garden or to a garden fair or nursery, where she can choose her own arrangements or plants. Stroll around the lawns and finish off with afternoon tea. Everyone will enjoy the sounds, colours and scents of spring. The fresh air, exercise and sunlight will also ensure that the children sleep soundly at the end of the day.

### **Outings**

One of the best Mother's Day gifts is spending quality time with the family. Ideas might include a trip to the zoo or beach, a nature ramble, a cycle ride through the countryside or a walk through a wild-flower meadow. End the outing with lunch or afternoon tea in Mum's favourite pub or restaurant. If the outing is carefully planned and packed with entertaining things to do, it can be a wonderful experience for the whole family.

If it rains, visit a museum. Children will enjoy looking inside an Egyptian mummy or finding out how mothers did things in the 'old' days. Most museums offer activities for children of all ages from interactive games and puzzles to quizzes and touch screens. While young minds are happily occupied, Mum and Dad can spend some quality time together.

Older children will enjoy indoor skydiving and bungee jumping or being orbited around in a giant plastic ball. If Mum and Dad join in with the activities, children will know that their parents are fun to be with.

### **Picnic**

A picnic hamper filled with mouth-watering food from smoked salmon to gourmet cheeses and chocolate truffles will be a special treat for Mum. The children can prepare heart-shaped biscuits and sandwiches and Mum will enjoy sampling the finished products. Dad can supervise the preparation to ensure that the play is safe.

Take Mum on a woodland picnic. The sun filtering through the trees will be a memorable sight. The children will enjoy exploring and they will burn off excess energy and sleep better at night, which gives Mum and Dad a chance to enjoy quality time together. If it rains, lay out the picnic on the living room floor.

### **Family photograph**

Have the camera charged and ready to capture the occasion. Mum will keep the photographs along with special cards, homemade gifts and other Mother's Day mementos. When Mum looks through the memories, she will reminisce about the day when she felt so special.

### **A special treat**

Although it may not be possible to take Mum to Paris, pamper her with an evening meal complete with French food, twinkling lights and French music playing in the background. The children can make the decorations, set out the table and help with the washing up. Themed bunting, plates and table decorations will add to the ambience, and Mum will appreciate and treasure the occasion.

## **Pampering**

At home, Mum and daughter can indulge in a make-over followed by hair styling. A relaxing foot massage will make Mum feel really pampered, but the children may want one too. Touch is good for their physical and emotional well-being and for healthy brain function. Children usually feel very relaxed after a massage and it makes them sleepy.

## **Bubble bath**

Treat Mum to an anti-stress bubble bath complete with scented candles or LED T-lights, and put on her favourite music. An inflatable bath pillow will provide the ultimate in comfort, although Mum may not want to come out of the bathroom.

Children will also find bath time to be a fun experience. They will enjoy tasting the water, making bubbles and listening to the sounds that they make when they pop. Make sure that the bath water is not too hot. A temperature of 38 degrees centigrade is ideal for babies and young children.

## **At the end of the day**

At the end of the day, cuddle up with Mum under a quilt and watch her favourite DVD together. Chocolate-covered strawberries and popcorn will go down well with the whole family. Simply giving up time to be with her will make Mum feel loved and valued.

Snuggling up with a book provides a perfect opportunity for parent-child bonding. Babies and children will enjoy the closeness and warmth that naturally occurs during the activity. They will love listening to the sound of Mum or Dad's voice, which has a positive effect on language development.

Put on a calming piece of music or a lullaby. It will help babies and children to relax and drift into peaceful sleep at the end of a busy day. Mum and Dad can then put their feet up and enjoy the evening together.

## **Finally...**

With a little planning, Mums will feel loved and appreciated on Mother's Day. Best of all, the whole family will enjoy quality time together, which has a positive impact on relationships and all aspects of development.