

Parenting Over The Miles – Ten Ways to Bond With Your Child From A Distance

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It is easier than ever before to stay in touch with your child, even from a distance. Learn 10 ways to use technology to communicate and bridge the distance when you cannot be in person.

The recent case out of New York where, according to Fox News, the Judge allowed a mother to move with her child from New York to Florida, but court-ordered access by the father through Skype, sheds light on the challenges of parenting in this new time of mobility. The good news is that modern technology provides valuable ways for parents to stay in touch, even over the miles, and Skype is not the only option.

Texas was the third state in the US to mandate frequent contact between parents and children via electronic communication. “The law usually lags behind in keeping up with technology, but in Texas, parents have options available to request electronic access to their children in the right situation, says [Dallas Divorce Lawyer](#) Michelle May O’Neil, a [Texas board certified family law specialist](#).

1. *The Telephone.* Agree or disagree, most kids these days have cell phones. This can be a benefit in staying in touch over a distance because it gives the parent and child the flexibility to make contact directly. The parent does not have to go through the other parent to reach the child, therefore reducing the potential for conflict. And, the child can be at home or anywhere else to be reached.
2. *Text messaging.* It’s all around us. People are texting while driving and cities are passing laws prohibiting it. Teenagers are being banned from having cell phones in school because they are distracted by texting. Many teens conduct full relationships over text without ever speaking in person. A parent can get in on this act by communicating with the child via text message and sharing short ideas back and forth even over great distances.
3. *E-mail.* E-mail remains the number one method of communicating over the internet. In parenting, it allows the child and parent to exchange private conversations. One benefit of using e-mail is that the e-mail can be created and sent when the parent is available and read by the child when the child is available, allowing for flexibility in scheduling.
4. *Instant messaging.* Many instant messaging programs exist that allow people to exchange messages in real time over the internet without picking up the phone. Yahoo messenger or Windows Messenger or other similar programs provide a way for parents to have a quick exchange with their child in a forum that will be familiar to the child.

5. *Skype or other video conferencing.* The internet provides options for free or inexpensive conferencing over the internet, including video conferencing. Skype seems to be the most talked about service, with some judges getting into the act by ordering Skype access. Video conferencing allows the parent and child to see each other and make face-to-face contact. “I have one client who lives in the U.K. and her son lives in Texas. They use Skype to keep in touch weekly,” offers O’Neil.

6. *Facebook.* Teenagers and others use Facebook to keep in touch with friends, but parents can also stay up on the activities of the child by reading the posts and responding. If the child posts about a bad day or negative event, the parent can use the opportunity to cheer up the child. As a side benefit, a parent can also keep up with the child’s friends on Facebook.

7. *Twitter.* Like a combination of texting and Facebook, Twitter is a forum that allows users to post very short status updates about their thoughts and activities. A parent can subscribe to the child’s posts and read or comment on what is going through the child’s mind at the moment.

8. *You Tube.* You Tube provides a way for users to post videos of their observations. Parents can use this in keeping involved in the child’s life by, for example, posting a video to share with the child of some event going on at the parent’s home while the child is with the other parent. Bringing a new puppy home? Make your long-distance child a part of the event by recording it and sharing the video on You Tube.

9. *Flickr.* Much like You Tube, a parent can use Flickr to post photos of events and share with the child. If the child is involved in a school play but the parent cannot attend, have the child or other parent take pictures and share on Flickr.

10. *Whiteboard.* Whiteboarding is similar to instant messaging in that the communication occurs in real time. But, whiteboarding stands apart in the ability to draw, use shapes, collaborate over images, and use voice chat while doing it. A parent can use whiteboarding to help a child with homework. “One client I have bought the same math book the child uses in school and then uses a whiteboard website to help the child understand his homework, even when the parent is across the country,” offers O’Neil. Scriblink.com is one example of a free whiteboard website.

Time and effort, says O’Neil, are the important factors in maintaining a relationship over a long-distance between a parent and child. The internet provides many tools that can help a parent and child creatively stay in touch.