

## Reading for Information

# Simply Grand: Generational Ties Matter

## Magazine Article

### What's the Connection?

In “A Celebration of Grandfathers,” Rudolfo Anaya recalls the deep bond he formed with his grandfather during the 1940s and expresses concern that children are no longer absorbing the traditions and values of their elders. In “Simply Grand: Generational Ties Matter,” you will read about the efforts that grandparents make to maintain ties with their grandchildren in today’s changing society.

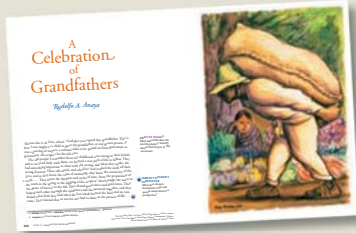
### Skill Focus: Identify Main Idea and Supporting Details

In nonfiction, the **main idea** is the most important idea, message, or opinion that the writer wants to communicate to the reader. A writer may state the main idea directly in the title or in a thesis statement or may only imply the idea, allowing the reader to infer it.

Writers develop a main idea through the use of **supporting details**, which appear throughout the body of an article or essay. References to supporting details may also appear in topic sentences or in subheadings. Supporting details can be

- facts or statistics
- examples
- statements from experts
- anecdotes

The chart below shows how the main idea was developed in “A Celebration of Grandfathers.” Using a similar chart, record the main ideas and supporting details in “Simply Grand.”



Use with  
“A Celebration of  
Grandfathers,”  
page 224.

#### Main Idea

People should respect their elders because they have important wisdom, experience, and traditions to share.

Anaya's grandfather taught him how to be patient.

Anaya learned about life by watching his grandfather age.



# SIMPLY GRAND:

## Generational Ties Matter

by Megan Rutherford

There is a magical moment in the latter half of life when adults have a chance to reinvent themselves. They take on new names: Nana, Grandma, Bubbeh, Poppy, Grandpa, Zayde. They cast themselves in new roles: caregiver, mentor, pal, pamperer. They are filled with powerful new emotions that make them feel alive and vital. They become grandparents.

“Every time a child is born, a grandparent is born too,” says grandparenting guru and retired child psychologist Arthur Kornhaber. The bond between grandchild and grandparent is second only to the attachment between parent and child. Kornhaber calls it “clear love” because it has no strings attached. “There’s always some conditional element to parents’ love. Grandparents are just glad to have you, and the child can feel that.”

That love may be the emotional equivalent of superglue, but it needs

points of contact in order to stick.

And today, like other family institutions, grandparenthood is being buffeted by sea changes.

Working against the free exchange of love are high divorce and remarriage rates, job stresses of dual-career parents (and grandparents), a global economy that puts vast distances between family members, and a pervasive bias against age spawned by the American obsession with youthfulness.

These impediments, however, are counterbalanced by innovations in travel, telecommunications, social understanding, health, and life expectancy. Savvy parents and grandparents are harnessing these to strengthen intergenerational ties. “We have to reinvent ourselves as we go along, but we have more time to get it right,” says Lillian Carson, a psychotherapist in Santa Barbara, California. . . . **A**

According to researchers, the better the relationship between parent and grandparent, the greater the contact and closeness between grandparent and grandchild. “It’s up to the parents to make the grandparents feel welcome and to send the message to their children that they’re really integral,” says Sally Newman, executive director of Generations Together at the

### **A** MAIN IDEA AND SUPPORTING DETAILS

What main idea can you infer from the first four paragraphs of this article?

University of Pittsburgh. “The parents  
60 should encourage frequent visits and  
not make the grandparents feel  
intrusive.” And spending time together  
is essential, says Yaffa Schlesinger, who  
teaches sociology of the family at New  
York City’s Hunter College. “If  
relationships are to be meaningful, they  
have to be deep in time. You cannot be  
friends with someone you met  
yesterday.” . . .

70 No child can have too much love  
and attention. But that’s not all  
grandparents have to offer. “Kids learn  
stuff from older people that they can’t  
get from anybody else,” says Newman.  
“Wisdom, patience, looking at things  
from many perspectives, tolerance, and  
hope. Older adults have lived through  
wars, losses, economic deprivations,  
and they give kids the security of  
80 knowing that horrendous things can be  
survived.” For the older generation, the  
relationship is equally precious.

“Having grandchildren is the  
vindication of everything one has done  
as a parent. When we see our children  
passing on our values to another  
generation, we know we have been  
successful,” says Margy-Ruth Davis, a  
new grandmother in New York City.

90 Keeping the gates open need not be  
expensive or arduous. Kathy Hersh, a  
Miami writer who is the mother of  
Katie, 11, and David, 7, sends a  
weekly packet of their photocopied  
poems, essays, teachers’ notes, and  
report cards to their maternal  
grandparents in Indiana and their  
paternal grandmother, a widow, in  
Arizona. The grandparents respond in  
100 kind. Kathy’s mother sends homemade  
jam, cookies, fudge—and lots and lots  
of books. “It’s not the value of the  
contents,” says Kathy. “It’s that  
the children have been thought of.”

The value of that is beyond measure.  
“I know my grandmother is always  
going to love me and think everything  
I do is wonderful,” Katie told her  
mother recently.

### TECHNOLOGICAL AIDS

110 Other grandparents are discovering  
the miracles of the technological  
revolution. Margy-Ruth and Perry  
Davis are heartsick that they cannot  
be part of their granddaughter’s daily  
life in Toronto. But she is already part  
of theirs, because the Davises have  
equipped their daughter with a digital  
camera, and every day she e-mails  
them a fresh picture of baby Tiferet.  
120 “It’s hard for every visit to be a state  
occasion, and it’s hard not to be able to  
pop over and just look in for half an  
hour,” says Margy-Ruth, “but at least  
this way I can watch the baby change  
day by day.” . . .

The Davises are not alone in  
cultivating electronic intimacy. Indeed,  
anecdotal evidence suggests that  
keeping in touch with grandchildren  
130 may be one of the main computer uses  
for seniors. Julia Sneden, a retired  
North Carolina kindergarten teacher,  
began e-mailing five-year-old Gina,  
her stepgranddaughter in California,  
several months before meeting her in  
person. When they finally set eyes on  
each other, they were already fast  
friends. . . .

Jacquie Golden of Salinas,  
140 California, finds that e-mail has an  
unexpected advantage over the  
telephone when communicating with  
her teenage grandson Timothy Haines,  
a student at the University of Nebraska.  
“On the phone, he’ll say everything is  
fine, his life is fine, his mother’s fine, his  
friends are fine. With e-mail he opens  
up. He tells me how he’s really doing,

how rotten his last football game was,  
150 and how school sucks. He gets down.”

Many far-flung families have discovered a wonderful Web freebie: create-your-own family sites, where relatives equipped with passwords can post messages, share family anecdotes, keep track of birthdays, scan in snapshots—and see what the rest of their extended family has been up to. Valerie Juleson lives in Wilton,  
160 Connecticut. Her 12 adult children—11 foster kids and one biological child—are spread out all over the United States and Europe, and her two grandchildren live in Florida. She keeps up with everyone through a website. **B**

### MULTICULTURAL CHALLENGES

Meera Ananthaswamy has a double challenge in uniting her children and parents: distance and culture. After  
170 emigrating with her parents from India to Canada in 1962, she moved with her husband and two daughters to Dallas three years ago. To maintain the closeness they felt when they all lived near one another in Hamilton, Ontario, the three generations try to get together at least twice a year. In addition, the two girls spend summers with their grandparents. Between visits, they  
180 stay in touch through weekly phone calls. Perumal Rajaram tells his granddaughters stories from Hindu mythology, instructs them in Indian philosophy and takes them to the Hindu temple in Hamilton for additional prayers. “It gives them history and a sense of where they’ve come from,” says Meera.

But sometimes Suma, 16, and  
190 Usha, 13, find their grandparents’ sense of tradition onerous. The girls like to wear jeans and shorts, which

Rajaram abhors. Then Meera steps in as interpreter. “I tell them, ‘Your grandparents’ definition of pretty is someone in a sari and not someone in short shorts. You’ve got to remember where your grandparents come from.’” . . .

200 Good communication and . . . [a] spirit of compromise have helped keep Meera’s family close. That’s not always the case in modern multicultural America, says sociology professor Schlesinger. The tragic irony is that many immigrants come to the U.S. in search of a better life for their children and grandchildren. But in order to achieve the goal set by their elders, the  
210 younger generation must assimilate, and when they do, they become strangers who speak a different language and live by an alien code. “The grandparent has achieved his American Dream,” says Schlesinger, “but at a terrible cost.” . . .

### FAMILY RITUALS

Even grandparents who have no physical or cultural divides separating them from their grandchildren may  
220 yearn for ways to get closer. David Stearman and his wife Bernice are lucky enough to have all six grandkids living within a 25-minute drive of their home in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Nonetheless, the Stearmans are always looking for ways to enhance their togetherness. So Bernice has made a habit of taking the kids to “M&Ms”—movies and malls. David does  
230 something a little more adventurous. For the past 10 summers, he has gone to camp with one—sometimes two—of his grandchildren. “The food is terrible, the beds are bad, there are no televisions or radios, but, man, you just feel good!” Stearman says. . . .

### **B** MAIN IDEA AND SUPPORTING DETAILS

What supporting details appear in the discussion of technological aids?



Many families create and maintain their own rituals. That's what Beverly Zarin, a retired reading consultant, and her husband Sol have done. For the past 20 years, the Zarins, who live in Connecticut, have vacationed together with their two sons and their sons' families for two weeks every summer in a bungalow colony in Maine. "That's been a tradition, a wonderful way to really get to know one another," she says. In November everyone heads for St. Louis, Missouri, for Thanksgiving with the Zarins' son Larry and his family. At Passover the whole clan gathers at Beverly's house. "So we spend a good time together at least three times a year," says Beverly.

Other grandparents try to share the turning points of their own lives with their grandchildren. Forty years ago, Dorris Alcott of Timonium, Maryland took her first trip abroad, and her exposure to new people and places forever changed the way she viewed the world. This summer she decided to give her granddaughter Sylviane, 16, the same experience. "I felt having this at her age would be far more memorable than any little bit of money I could leave her—plus I'd have her to myself for three weeks!" Sylviane was moved by the experience of traveling with her grandmother. "I realized it was probably the last time I was ever going to spend that much time with her," she says, "and the first time too." As a result of the trip, Sylviane says, "I have more respect for my grandmother." . . .

### CARING FOR CHILDREN

In a world with a shortage of good day care and an abundance of single-parent and two-career households, grandparents willing to care for their

grandchildren are highly prized. In the old days, such care was generally rendered by Grandma. Today the social forces that produced the stay-at-home dad have introduced the caregiver grandad. Peter Gross, a retired law professor, picks up grandsons Paul, 3, and Mark, 18 months, every weekday morning at 8:15 and cares for them in his San Francisco home until 6 p.m. "It's a very close, intense relationship that's at the center of my life," says Gross. "What a relief to retire from the hurly-burly of the adult institutions of our world, where . . . politics and limitations tend to dominate, and move into this place of love and truth and nurturing and connection." **C**

Gross has a deep, everyday relationship with his grandchildren that many grandparents would move halfway around the world to enjoy. In fact, that's just about what Judith Hendra did. This summer Hendra quit her job as a fund raiser for Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City, sold her loft, and moved with her husband, a free-lance photographer, and her German shepherd to Los Angeles to be near her 18-month-old granddaughter Julia. "I reckon I have a window of opportunity of about 10 years before she turns into a California preteen, and then it'll be over," jokes Hendra. In the meantime Hendra, who plans to work part-time as a consultant, is looking forward to indulging a modest-sounding ambition: "I'd like to be a person who's taken for granted, who picks Julia up from school and does ordinary things that are actually very important for kids. I don't want to be a special event." Now that's something special.

### **C** MAIN IDEA AND SUPPORTING DETAILS

How does the information in lines 276–298 support the writer's main idea?

## Comprehension

1. **Recall** Name two factors that can make it difficult for grandparents and grandchildren to develop a close relationship.
2. **Summarize** How do grandchildren benefit from having a close relationship with their grandparents?

## Critical Analysis

3. **Analyze Supporting Details** Review the supporting details in the chart you created and identify the kind of supporting detail (such as examples or anecdotes) that the writer used most often. Why might the writer have chosen to use this kind of supporting detail?
4. **Compare and Contrast** In “A Celebration of Grandfathers” and “Simply Grand,” Rudolfo A. Anaya and Megan Rutherford discuss how families are affected by changes in society. Compare and contrast their views on this topic.

## Read for Information: Make Generalizations

### WRITING PROMPT

After reading “A Celebration of Grandfathers” and “Simply Grand,” what general statements can you make about the grandparent-grandchild relationship? Write an **editorial** in which you make three generalizations about this relationship. Use information from both selections and your own experience to support your response.

To answer this prompt, you will need to make generalizations. A **generalization** is an idea or statement that summarizes the general characteristics rather than the specific details of a subject. To make a generalization, follow these steps.

1. Gather evidence—facts, anecdotes, and observations—about the grandparent-grandchild relationship.
2. Look for patterns or connections among the pieces of evidence.
3. Make a general statement that characterizes the patterns or connections.
4. Review the evidence to make sure your generalizations are well supported and fair. Revise them if necessary.

