

Word Match

QUESTION: Can you share some words to say that match the smiles and hugs I give my children?

ANSWER: Here is a great list of “verbal hugs” for kids. Any or all of them may be used liberally each day with your child.

- I’m glad to share this (day, time, lunch) with you.
- I’m glad you’re here.
- I’m glad you live in this house.
- I enjoy you.
- I enjoy being with you.
- I’m glad we’re (riding, walking, playing working) together.
- I thought about you during the day.
- I like you.
- I’m glad you are in my (house, life, family).
- I think you are a neat kid.
- I’m glad you are my son/daughter.
- Thanks for being you.
- I like the way you did that.
- You have a good eye for color.
- Thank you for picking up the (papers, dishes, toys).
- You are one great (cook, duster, picker-upper).
- I am amazed at your improvement.
- You are the fastest (runner, worker, helper) I know.
- Nice job of planning.
- Great follow-through.
- You think well.
- I love the way you use your voice.
- You certainly are clever.
- Thanks for the gift.
- I appreciate the way you listen.
- What you said is very interesting. Thanks for sharing.
- You encourage me to think.
- You put things together in creative ways.
- Thank you for being so patient.
- I’m proud of the way you did that.

Remember that encouragement, which is describing specific appreciated behaviors or attitudes, is usually more affirming than praise, which is telling children that they are “good.” Praise is reserved for things well done. It implies a spirit of competition, like being evaluated and earning a grade. Encouragement is given for effort or improvement. It implies a spirit of cooperation.