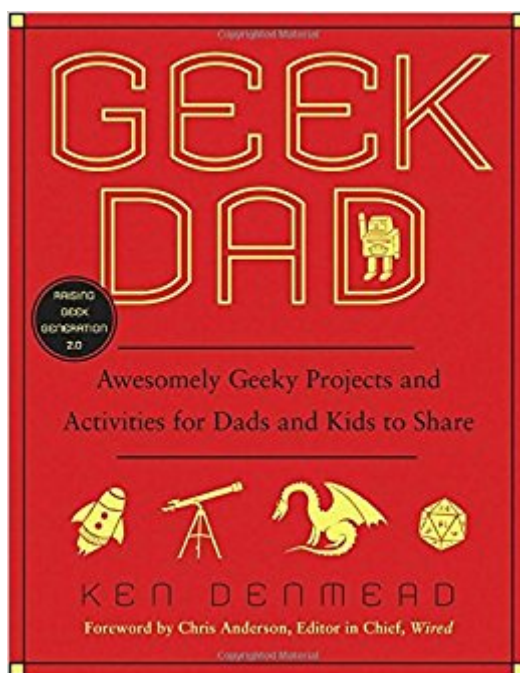


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Geek Dad: Awesomely Geeky Projects And Activities For Dads And Kids To Share



Synopsis

The ultimate DIY project guide for techie dads raising kids in their own geeky image, in the spirit of *The Dangerous Book for Boys*. Today's generation of dads grew up more tech-savvy than ever. Rather than joining the Little League team, many grew up playing computer games, Dungeons and Dragons, and watching Star Wars. Now with kids of their own, these digital-age dads are looking for fresh ways to share their love of science and technology, and help their kids develop a passion for learning and discovery. Enter supergeek, and father of two, Ken Denmead. An engineer and editor of the incredibly popular GeekDad blog on wired.com, Ken has created the ultimate, idea-packed guide guaranteed to help dads and kids alike enjoy the magic of playtime together and tap into the infinite possibility of their imagination. With illustrations throughout, this book offers projects for all ages to suit any timeframe or budget. With Denmead's expert guidance, you and your child can:

- Fly a night-time kite ablaze with lights or launch a video camera with balloons
- Construct the "Best Slip n' Slide Ever," a guaranteed thrill ride
- Build a working lamp with LEGO bricks and CDs
- Create a customized comic strip or your own board game
- Make geeky crafts like cyborg jack-o'-lanterns or Ethernet cuff links

Brimming with endlessly fun and futuristic tidbits on everything from gaming to gadgets, GeekDad helps every tech-savvy father unleash his inner kid-and bond with the next generation of brainiacs.

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Customer Reviews

Ken Denmead is the Publisher and Editor-at-Large of GeekDad.com. A professional civil engineer,

he lives near San Francisco with his wife and two sons, who are both geeks-in-training.

Introduction About Being a Geek and a Dad

Once upon a time, the word geek was used to describe circus performers. Then it evolved as a pejorative to describe awkward, skinny kids who got routinely thrown into school lockers by the high school football team. But these days, geek has reinvented itself. This is the era of the geek. And geeks are cool. There is some interchangeability between geek and nerd. They both generally describe someone of restricted social ability who finds enjoyment in pursuits outside the mainstream—pursuits like computers, role-playing games (RPGs), science fiction and fantasy literature and movies, science and engineering, and so on—you get the idea. But there is a key difference between the geek and the nerd. One renowned geek dad (and honorary Geek Dad), Wil Wheaton, describes it pretty simply: A geek is a self-aware nerd. It makes a lot of sense to me—I think geeks had those social issues growing up and liked all those things that weren't part of the popular culture in school, but we came to understand our nature and, in a very Kbler-Ross kind of way, moved past the self-limiting aspects of nerdhood to a state of acceptance, and even enjoyment, of our place in the universe. Which, in a funny way, helped us take care of some of those social issues, because a lot of us ended up actually getting married and having kids (which totally rocks!). I think part of the current ascendancy of geeks in general, and Geek Dads specifically, is that there are a lot more geeky women than people realize, and some of us geeky guys were smart enough to recognize our own kind and attempt to mate and perpetuate the subspecies. But before I get too far along, let me point out something important: Geeks aren't just about the computers and the D&D and the passion for anime and comic books. There's a whole lot more out there that people get passionate about, even mildly obsessive about, that can qualify them as geeks. If you're so passionate about something that you're not just good at it but can lose yourself doing it for long periods of time (often to your social detriment), you may be a geek. If you carry encyclopedic knowledge about a topic and will joyfully use it to act as the pedant whenever the subject is being discussed, you may be a geek. If you have a room in your house devoted to a hobby that other family members avoid talking about, you may indeed be a geek. I'm not talking about "experts" or "professionals"—I'm talking about the real deal. Here are some examples: So, what are the factors that make up the geek? I'd like to posit that the geek is a combination of common personality factors that we see in all sorts of people. Indeed, these factors taken alone or only in pairs may lead to less desirable characters. See, for example, the Venn diagram below (talk about geeky!), where I've described the possible

combinations of key personality factors that make up the geek, and its associated stereotypes: Knowledgeability, Obsessiveness, and Social Skills. Knowledgeability represents having significant stored information with easy recall. That knowledge may be broad and relatively shallow or the know-it-all or it may cover only a few topics but be deep and profound or the expert/problem solver. Obsessiveness is a person's inability to lose himself in something he has a passion for. Common symptoms include losing track of time while coding HTML/CSS or staying up until four a.m. to finish Portal because you had to earn watching the final credits (and hearing that awesome Jonathan Coulton song). Social Skills can mean a lot of things, not all of which are about being "popular," which geeks and nerds always feel they never were in their formative years. But geeks do at least have enough presence and personality to form lasting relationships, which helps differentiate them. So first, it's easy to tag all the stand-alones: Dorks are the people who are obsessive without the introspection to recognize it in themselves or how it could affect others. Dweebs know everything but can't apply or express themselves. Goobers are good-natured but lazy idiots or no one minds them, but they aren't much use. It starts to get interesting when you begin combining the traits. The classic nerd has knowledge/intelligence AND the obsessive nature that produces results. You can't expect them to carry on conversations that won't lose a non-nerd audience or they would talk your ear off about something as nerdy as the exciting application of quantum theory on the flow of mold over a piece of cheese, but set them to work on a project without distraction, and you'll be able to mine the results for pure gold (especially if it has to do with World of Warcraft and, you know, gold mining). The twit or well, I suppose there are other names for this person, probably a lot of regional variations but the twit combines obsessiveness and social skills into a double-edged sword. This could be that sales guy who can talk up a storm but who really doesn't know squat, or it could be the diligent hard worker everyone likes but who really just doesn't get it. And then there's the gadfly. He's smart and he gets invited to parties, but he's lazy. Or worse, he's intellectually smart but emotionally ignorant, and doesn't care. He's the one most likely to be the pedant in any gathering, and he probably uses people to get the work done he finds beneath him. Of course those are extremes, and there are perfectly lovely, functional people who fall into those categories; but they're not the ones we're here to talk about. In the sweet spot, right there in the middle, is the tripartite synergy that creates the geek. The mixture of knowledge (about comic books, particle physics, or the works of Mozart), obsessiveness (they'll sit in front of a computer or a workbench for hours perfecting, building, or playing anything), and social skills (they

actually get together with people for pen-and-paperRPGs or get in line with a bunch of friends to see the midnightshowing of the next Star Trek movie), that makes a well-rounded,self-sustaining person of affable oddity. Now maybe weigh it just slightly toward the social skill set, andyou have someone who can actually get a date, find a mate, get married,and procreate. That, in a nutshell, is how a GeekDad comesinto being. The conditions need to continue to be favorable—•isthere support at home for ongoing geekiness? Will infecting thechild(ren) be allowed? How many times will the wife feign a chucklewhen you lift your little tyke and in a deep voice intone, “Luke, Iam your father” (knowing it’s a misquote) before it gets old? Howmany jokes about containment breaches will be tolerated at diaperchangingtime? It helps immeasurably when your mate is a geek, too (but that’sanother book). I’ve been lucky enough to have that situation in mymarriage. In fact, not only have my little quirks been tolerated, butsome of them have actually been encouraged. And in return, I encourageback. I mean, how many men can say their wives wanted atrip to a science fiction convention for their anniversary? I’m onelucky man. But the best part is getting to share with my kids, share thegeeky things that informed my childhood and continue to informmy existence: Star Wars, Star Trek, math, science, reading, writing,music, computers and video games, movies and television. I can’ttell you the joy of having my kids get into Doctor Who and comicbooks and Lord of the Rings, and then talking with them about theimportant aspects of the stories and watching them just soak it up.I lived through the school years as a breed apart (though I hadgood friends who were geeks, too), so it makes me feel great to beable to inform and guide my kids through the social aspects, andthe occasional challenges, of growing up as a geek. All parents wantto protect their kids, but I like to think the best protection I canoffer them is to help them understand what will happen, why, andhow to best deal with it. I want them to know that different isn’tbad, and that being intelligent and inquisitive is something to beproud of. Indeed, that’s what being a GeekDad really means for me. For allour personality quirks and interests in pursuits that are outside themainstream (or at least interests more technical than is usually palatablefor the mainstream), we’re all about understanding, and communicating,and connecting with others by sharing what we loveand helping others to grok it as well. Of course there’s a biologicalimperative to have kids and raise them to survive and thrive, butwe want them to be happy, too—whatever happiness may mean tothem. I’ll encourage my kids to love what I do, but I won’t force it onthem, and when they want to try something different, I’m happy tolet them just as long as they come at it like a geek: They should beknowledgeable about it, be a little obsessive about it, and get alongwith the other people who are doing it. That’s what all the greatestgeeks do. Geeky Projects for

Dads and Kids to Share

Most “parenting” books aren’t about things you can do with your kids. Most are about things to do to your kids, tricks and tactics for tweaking their behavior in some desired manner usually at odds with what kids really want: to play, and spend real quality time with you. I’m not saying all those books are bad. Some of them do try to reinforce the idea of spending quality time (though I’d really like to find a new phrase to replace quality time) with your kids. This book has the same goal of those others: to help you share time with your kids in their formative years in constructive, educational ways, without making that time seem as if it’s supposed to be constructive or educational (not always easy). The difference here is that from a geek’s perspective, constructive and educational may not mean what all those other books think it means. Here’s what makes our approach different: - Geeks like games that require a fantastic imagination. - Geeks love science and knowing how things work. Experimentation is the best way to learn those things. If things go “boom” in the process, all the better. - Geeks love finding interesting, creative solutions for problems that could be solved in a more mundane fashion. - Geeks love to play, but in playing, to build and learn as well. There is a plethora of projects included here about an eclectic array of subjects, from board games to electronics, crafts to coding. But I’m not here to tell you exactly what to do. The instructions are meant to give you a structure to start your adventure with your kids. Each of these projects will allow for extensive customization and personalization. Indeed, what I have in my workshop and available at the hardware store in my town may be rather different from what you have. So I expect you to improvise, adapt, and even (quite likely) improve on these projects.

Project Information

At the start of each project, you’ll see a table with summary information to give you an idea what to expect from it, and there are some symbols not unlike what you see in a restaurant or hotel review to explain cost and difficulty. Here’s a legend to explain their meaning. One thing you’ll notice as you go through the projects in this book is that they are not long, costly, or overly difficult and involved projects that take too much work before paying off in the fun department. If you and your kid have the kind of patience and geeky determination to spend days/weeks/months on a project, then let me suggest you take up painting Warhammer armies or mapping the visible sky in your area with a telescope you built from scratch. It’s not that I don’t have respect for folks that do that kind of thing! On the contrary, they are the epitome of geekhood, and I am not worthy to clean their brushes or polish their lenses. I just don’t have that kind of time or energy. I want to do something fun with my kids NOW (or at least in the few minutes to couple of hours it takes to complete any project in this book). So you’ll find that the most important common features all these projects have is that they are

accessible, affordable, and truly buildable for just about anyone with an ounce of geek in them.

Okay, it's time. Go get your kid(s) and get started!

Perfect for families looking for creative and amazing projects, Geek Dad had me bookmarking favorites to try right away. Many involve science in a fun, lightweight way. I can't imagine a child who wouldn't be excited by the prospect of some of these activities: the ultimate outdoor obstacle course, the light-up nighttime kite, the finger-painting with windup toys. The directions make each step simple and understandable. Each project has a table that describes the concept, lists the tools and materials needed, and gives ratings for cost, difficulty, duration and reusability. Costs are from \$0 up to over \$100. Difficulty levels begin with primary-school kids up to high school age. Duration is from 0 to 15 minutes up to 3 hours or longer. Reusability ranges from one-time-only use to "good forever." Throughout the book are drawings, maps, diagrams and tables. Everything's in black and white. Here's the chapter list:

Introduction: About Being a Geek and a Dad
Make Your Own Geeky Games and Crafts
1. Make Your Own Cartoons
2. The Coolest Homemade Coloring Books
3. Create the Ultimate Board Game
4. Electronic Origami
5. Cyborg Jack-o'-Lanterns and Other Holiday Decorations
6. Windup Toy Finger Painting
7. Create a Superhero ABC Book
8. Model Building with Cake
9. Pirate Cartography
10. Parenting and Role-Playing Games
11. A Never-Ending Demolition Derby
Geeky Activities for the Great Outdoors
12. See the World from the Sky
13. Best Slip 'n Slide Ever
14. Fireflies for Every Season
15. Video Games That Come to Life
16. Fly a Kite at Night
17. Build an Outdoor Movie Theater
18. The "Magic" Swing
Awesome Accessories
19. Smart Cuff Links
20. Light-up Duct Tape Wallet
21. Crocheted Dice Bag of Holding
Geeky Kids Go Green
22. The Science of Composting
23. Home Hydroponics
Build / Learn / Geek
24. Build a Binary Calendar
25. Portable Electronic Flash Cards
26. Wi-Fi Signal Booster
27. Cool LEGO Lighting from Repurposed Parts
Geeky Potpourri
Ice Cubes Fit for a Geek
Exploding Drink Practical Joke
Afterword: Pneumatic Wiffle Ball Cannon -- Failure as a Project
Appendix A: Resources and References by Chapter
Appendix B: RPG Character Sheet
Appendix C: Projects Listed by Rank

Not quite what I was expecting when I bought this for my son's father when he was born. I was thinking it would have more science experiments in it, but this particular title is geared more towards gaming (which is fine too since Dad is also a gamer). If you want more science based stuff, I would suggest another title in the series: Geek Dad: The Book for Aspiring Mad Scientist. This second title has a lot more science based project for fathers to do with their children. However, this title is still pretty cool, it approaches parenting from a DnD perspective in many of its activities. My

son's father seems to like it well enough and since it was a gift for him I guess that is all that matters :D

great

good book for any geek

This book is so fun! The projects are more than just crafts for boys. My husband can do these with our daughters and totally geek out. This is for the true geeky Dad.

An essential book for all those geek dads in the world! I bought this book for my brother-in-law, but I read it myself, too. There are a lot of fun projects to do. Once I have kids I will pick up another copy.

Somewhat dissapointing. I was hoping for projects that I would actually want to do with my son. RJ45 cufflinks? Duct tape wallet? A lot of arts and crafts geeky themed stuff.

Great Book 4 our autism spectrum boys. I've used some of the activities. Unfortunately my husband hasn't but that is not the books problem!

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Dads! Be The Dad They Never Had: A Guide For All Step Dads Books For Kids: Natalia and the Pink Ballet Shoes (KIDS FANTASY BOOKS #3) (Kids Books, Children's Books, Kids Stories, Kids Fantasy Books, Kids Mystery ... Series Books For Kids Ages 4-6 6-8, 9-12) Rich Dad Poor Dad: What The Rich Teach Their Kids About Money - That the Poor and Middle Class Do Not! My Super Dad: (Children's book about a Cute Boy and his Superhero Dad, Picture Books, Preschool Books, Ages 3-5, Baby Books, Kids Book, Bedtime Story Martha Stewart's Favorite Crafts for Kids: 175 Projects for Kids of All Ages to Create, Build, Design, Explore, and Share The Real Animal House: The Awesomely Depraved Saga of the Fraternity That Inspired the Movie The Book of Veganish: The Ultimate Guide to Easing into a Plant-Based, Cruelty-Free, Awesomely Delicious Way to Eat, with 70 Easy Recipes Anyone can Make Big Science for Little People: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Child Discover the Wonders of Science (An Official Geek Mama Guide) The Geeky Chef Strikes Back!: Even More Unofficial Recipes from Minecraft, Game of Thrones, Harry Potter, Twin Peaks, and More!

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