

39 Activities For Kids At Home (For When You're Out Of Ideas)

We are all spending so much extra time at home to keep our families and our communities safe. Here are 39 (cheap or free) indoor activities for kids (and parents) at home! Choose the ideas that work for you and your family and leave the rest. You may want to keep this list handy for times when you need a spark of joy.



My personal favorite, and what I did with my own children, is to write the ideas on a piece of paper, fold them, and put them into a jar. Select one fun activity to do after completing some school work, or a family chore, or anytime you just need to lift your spirits together. Play is healing and builds happy memories and protects children from the stress of the world. Join your child in play and be well together.

1) Make homemade playdough.

Any time we make homemade playdough, it's a hit.

You'll need:

- flour,
- salt,
- cream of tartar, and
- food coloring

There are so many recipes online. Look for a link on my website:

2) Put mattresses on the floor.

If you have spring mattresses for your kid's beds, put them on the floor. They can do gymnastics moves or just jump to their little hearts' content.

Putting mattresses on the floor is generally novel, which can buy you quite a bit of time.

3) Build a fort.

Kids usually use couch cushions, but there are other options, too. You can keep a supply of old sheets on hand – hopefully Marie Kondo didn't talk you into getting rid of them all just yet – and clothes pins. Let the fort building begin!

4) Organize a rock collection.

I'm betting that if you have small children, they already have quite the rock collection. Take advantage of that!

If not, have them gather some from outside to sort and possibly paint as well (if you're up for it). Organize them, sort them, paint them. Let the creativity begin!

5) Read aloud.

Use the resources that your teacher has given you for access to reading books online.

6) Audio books.

Audible is giving free access to books for a short time.

7) Make finger puppets (or sock puppets).

Draw your own or find pictures of your favorite television characters online. Copy the picture into a Word document and resize to finger width. Print, color, and tape the puppet to fit either yours or your child's fingers. Have the kids write out a play or ask them to act out some of their feelings.

8) Put on a play with stuffed animals, and record a video of it.

Set up a stage by draping a sheet over a bench, or turn a chair around so your kids can stay hidden behind the chair. Use stuffed animals (or their finger and sock puppets) to put on a play.

Record it using your iPhone or iPad and watch it over and over again.

Your kids will find it hysterical to watch their own shows over and over again! Hours of entertainment.

9) Draw.

YouTube has many how to draw videos, but you can also just let them draw anything they want to draw, or give them a list of objects to find, like a scavenger hunt, and draw those items.

10) Make smoothie popsicles.

Smoothie popsicles are a great way to get nutrients into your kids without the extremely high amount of sugar found in typical grocery store offerings and to use up any fruit that might spoil if you don't eat it right away.

All you need is a decent blender and some popsicle molds.

The kids can help make the smoothie in the morning (we make extra to have leftovers for popsicles) and watch you pour it into the molds. They are generally ready by the afternoon.

11) Freeze water to play with.

You can freeze water in a bin with small toys like little plastic toys. The kids will have a blast trying to get the toys out of the ice. So easy, but so entertaining.

12) Sensory bins.

Sensory bins offer children the chance to use as many of their senses as possible in play. These bins are simple to make, as they often use toys combined with kitchen pantry items. The only problem is when your kids like to dump or throw the items in the bins (picture beans EVERYWHERE).

At a minimum, you will need bins, beans or pasta or rice, and small toys like little plastic animals or other small toy treasures you have around the house.

13) Bathtime fun.

As long as your child doesn't have sensitive skin, you can add bubble bath to keep it entertaining as long as possible. Let them bring some of their favorite plastic toys into the tub for play.

You can also make DIY Bath Paints and find recipes online.

14) Make a book.

Staple paper together, and help your kids write and illustrate a book. You can use real books for direct inspiration or come up with a plot entirely by yourself. Or have them write out and draw their feelings of the day.

15) Building contests.

LEGOs, Duplos, and Magna-tiles are our main building toys. My only caveat here is to think carefully about how you want to judge the contest.

Will there be one winner and loser? Categories with a prize for each one?

16) Bowling with empty soda cans.

If you don't drink soda or seltzer, you could try setting up water bottles instead. Make sure the cans are rinsed and fully empty, or you'll have a nice mess to clean up, too. We're trying to make the day better, not worse!

17) Puzzles.

Kids don't mind doing the same puzzles over and over. You can also take magazines and make your own puzzles by cutting them into small pieces to be reassembled.

18) Dance party.

Turn on some music and just dance! You may have to allow yourself to get silly with it so they will join in. Or turn on some dance YouTube channels and learn a new line dance together.

19) Board games.

Play a favorite board game together, or invent and design a new board game.

20) Write letters to friends.

Who doesn't like receiving something other than bills and junk in the mail?

Have some blank cards or plain paper on hand and have your kids draw a picture or write to friends or family.

21) Indoor Hopskotch.

Use painter's tape to set up a grid for Hopskotch on any non-carpeted floor. Give the kids a small block or socks balled up, and let them have a blast.

22) Paper airplanes.

Make and fly some planes and have a contest if you want!

23) Call friends/family using Google Hangouts.

Children can call friends using the google hangouts option in their google account to set up “play time” with friends.

24) Learn a new language.

If you haven't heard of Duolingo, check it out. This website provides free language instruction for many different languages. You and your kids can learn languages together.

Youtube is another great source of language instruction, which requires much less involvement aside from screening advertisements. There are several channels with foreign language videos for kids.

25) Give them a cardboard box.

After they have been sanitized or left outside long enough to be virus free, build forts, pretend they are rocket ships. You can plop the toddler into the box with markers and let him go to town without fear of him drawing on the walls.

26) Paint.

Be sure to lay down newspaper or craft mats to make clean-up easy.

27) Dress-up.

Play dress up, or actually get dressed up for dinner like you are going to a fancy restaurant. Spend the day making decorations and setting the table for a nice meal at home together. Let your children pretend to be the food servers and take your order and serve your meal.

28) Build a stomp rocket.

You can find great tutorials on building a stomp rocket yourself with basic materials found at home.

29) Poetry tea time.

Essentially, you just prepare a special treat or snack and read poetry. That's it. Even boys LOVE it. Choose randomly hilarious poetry.

30) Invent new uses for old toys.

When you get tired of just playing with the same toys again and again, it's time to change it up. You can swap out toys and only bring out certain toys on certain days to keep things fresh. Or mix up different kinds of toys all at once to change up how your children play.

31) Picnic in the house.

Some families have “you can only eat in the kitchen” rules. If that's you, however, this will be an even bigger hit!

Picnic in a different room of the house will be memorable and change things up.

Your kids will probably be talking about this one for ages. In fact, when they keep talking about it well into the future, you will wonder will you ever spent so much money on trips and amusement parks. It really doesn't take much to make kids happy.

32) Bubbles.

Bubbles are always a hit with kids of any age.

33) Cook and bake together.

Make meal plans together for the week.

34) Bird watch.

Keep a journal of the different birds you see. Describe them, take pictures of them, make a drawing of them, and research what kind of bird it might be.

35) Balloons.

Make time for balloon bouncing. Make up rules as you go. Kids love making up rules to games and changing them as they go.

36) Make an obstacle course.

Use chairs, tables, pillows, stuffed animals and go under, crawl around, hop over and see how many different ways you can set up the course. Compete with your child and time them. Let them take a good long time setting up the course and keep giving them add on ideas or ways to change it up. Give them a set of instructions in how many “under”, “over”, and “around” elements the course will include. This helps them with listening to instructions and following the steps in order. It’s fun and it trains them to listen for multi-step instructions.

37) Play follow the leader on your walks in the neighborhood.

Take turns with each family member being the leader. Hop, skip, circle your arms, walk like a chicken, make animal noises, anything to mix up the normal routine, while staying on a schedule.

38) Play Red Light, Green Light.

Even while doing the simplest chores or games, like brushing teeth, you can play red light, green light to get more cooperation and make things more fun. Red light means stop, green light means go. You can even say yellow light for slow motion fun.

39) Visit Ms. Wandel’s website for more fun activities.

<https://mswandel.weebly.com/>