



Non-screen Activities for Kids

These activities do not require hard-to-find instructions, or any unusual material. Most of the items that you will need can be found around in your home.

- Have your child create an “imaginary pet.” Have them describe all its characteristics and capabilities, and draw a picture of it.
- Have a dance party
- Call friends and family members. On the phone. With voices. Like we did in the olden days.
- Teach the kids a simple magic trick.
- Give the kids a paper bag filled with random objects and have them create a skit together, using all the objects.
- Play indoor bowling. Put a small amount of water in used water bottles and screw the lids on tightly. Then use any ball that’s not too hard.
- Draw portraits of each other, then take photos of each person with their portrait.
- Have you children teach you something. Let them show you something that they are experts in and that you know nothing about.
- Write in a journal together every day. Write about what your day is like, what the challenges are, what the fun things are.
- Have your child decorate the inside of a large cardboard box with crayons. Great idea for a fort!
- Paint with cotton balls. Put a dab of paint in each hole in a muffin tin. Then attach a clothespin to a cotton ball and put one on each dab of paint. Kids can use the clothespin as a holder to paint on paper.
- Make homemade instruments.
- Put an object in a paper bag and have your child try to guess what it is just by touch. Then have your child put an object in the bag and you guess.
- Very young children (2 and under) love this: on a very warm day take them outside with a bucket of water and a big paintbrush and let them “paint” the outside of the house. Or give them a big sponge to “wash” the house.
- Make your own butter. Put heavy cream in a jar with a lid. Shake the jar until butter forms. It’ll be a while, 15 or 20 minutes. It’s an arm workout. When that happens, just pour out the liquid, which is buttermilk. Then, you can add some salt or herbs to the butter for flavoring.
- If you have more than one child, encourage them to each secretly do a kind thing for the other. Whether it’s making a homemade toy, or preparing a favorite snack, or doing a chore for the other, doing it as a surprise makes it more fun.
- Plant sunflower seeds. They are easy to grow and their towering height and giant blooms make them fun for kids.
- Create your own bingo cards and play bingo.
- Make a time capsule that documents this crazy time.
- Decorate t-shirts with permanent markers.
- Build a bridge or tower with toothpicks. To make it easier, put a tiny bit of clay or play-dough on the tips of the toothpicks.
- Let your child rearrange the furniture in his or her bedroom, with help. Just moving a bed from one spot to another can seem like an adventure.
- Learn to juggle. Start with beanbags if you have them so that you’re not chasing after balls too much. Here are simple instructions.
- Create a family tree.
- Paint each other’s nails.



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- Look through old family photo albums, either from when the kids were littler, or from before they were born. Let them laugh at your haircut.
- Make a homemade jigsaw puzzle by cutting up the front of a cereal box or a greeting card.
- Try some origami. It's easy to find instructions online and you can use any kind of paper, in a crunch.
- Do stamp art with vegetables. Just cut them in half, dry them well, and dip them in paint.
- Make puppets from paper lunch bags if you have any around. No lunch bags? Try socks.
- Make a blanket fort.
- If you have wax paper, scavenge for some leaves or flowers, put them between two pieces of wax paper. Add very small bits of crayons, or yarn, or pretty much any almost-flat object. Then put a piece of newspaper over the top sheet of wax paper and have an adult iron the two pieces of wax paper together.
- Make play dough. Add 1 cup of flour, 1/2 cup salt, 2 teaspoons cream of tartar, 1 cup of warm water, 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil, and some food coloring into a pot. Cook over a low heat, and keep stirring until it's no longer sticky. Take it off the heat and let it cool for 30 minutes.
- Make a memory jar and have everyone write down a memory (or dictate one) that they don't want to forget. Make this a family tradition.
- If you have non-carpeted floors, have the kids put socks on their feet and hands and play "dogs on ice."
- Make a board game. Use any piece of cardboard for the game board, using markers to draw up the board navigation. Use pieces from other games or any small objects you have around the house, as the game pieces.
- Make a picnic. Lay out a sheet or blanket on the floor, or outside if you have a yard, and eat some fun picnic food.
- Make a treasure hunt. First hide the prize, which can be anything. It doesn't have to be something new. Then hide a clue to the hiding spot of the prize somewhere else. And work backwards until you have 10 or so clues.
- Grab some papers that you haven't recycled or shredded yet, crumple them up into "snowballs" and let the battle begin.
- Yarn bomb a piece of furniture.
- If you have a dog, teach the dog a new trick. If you don't have a dog, have the kids teach each other new tricks.
- Teach your kids your favorite song from when you were a teenager. Find it on Spotify.
- Play 20 questions.
- Play Marco Polo in a room without a lot of trippable obstacles. Blindfold one kid and have him or her find you or the other kids.
- Make a collaborative drawing. One person draws a shape, and then the next, and the next, taking turns until the picture is "done."
- Or make a collaborative story the same way. Each person tells one line of the story, letting it go in unexpected directions.
- Write letters to relatives
- Play classic games like "Follow the leader," "Red Light, Green Light," "Simon Says," and "Leap Frog."
- Teach your kids classic card games.



- If have bubble wrap around, put it on the ground and let the kids stomp on it.
- If you have balloons around, blow them up and challenge the kids to keep them up in the air.
- Learn Morse Code.
- Create an indoor obstacle course, or an outdoor one if you have a yard.
- Put on your fanciest clothes and have a tea party.
- Have a scavenger hunt.
- Camp out in the living room (or the backyard if you have one) in sleeping bags.
- Play charades.
- Create a race track for toy cars on the floor with painter's tape.
- Use painter's tape to create a "web" in a doorway. Have your kids crumple up paper and try to throw it through the web.
- Make a collage by cutting up pictures from a magazine. Or cut up really small pieces from the pictures and make a mosaic.
- Make string art by "drawing" a design on paper with glue, and then putting yarn on the glue.
- Make decorated bookmarks out of cardboard.
- Play I-Spy, looking for objects that a certain color or that start with a certain letter.
- Play restaurant, where the kids are the wait staff. Have them bring you play food. Send it back, saying that it's not cooked right. (Trust me on this one. It makes it more interesting.)
- Play this memory game. Say a name. Then the next person says that a new name and the name you said. Each person adds on a new name, trying to remember the whole sequence.
- Trace your kids' hands and have them color them in, turning them into something other than hands.
- Create a town out of cardboard boxes if you have any around.
- Turn off the lights, get out a flashlight and make shadow puppets, either with your hands, or by drawing animals on cardboard and cutting them out.
- Give the kids five objects and have them make up a play or story, using each object.
- Make paper airplanes.
- Make a family magazine by writing stories and drawing pictures about shared experiences. Include an advice column, where your child is the advice-giver.
- Have a contest to see how high they can build a LEGO tower.
- Make a flip book. Remember those? Draw a picture in the corner of each page of a drawing pad, changing the picture just a little bit from page to page, so it looks like the figure is moving.
- Paint your kids' faces. Or let them paint yours.