



Keeping Kids Busy!

Produced by
Activity Village Publications

With contributions from:

Activity Village Publications
All That Women Want
Creative Homemaking
Seeds of Knowledge
Note-Ables
ArtbyCheryl.com



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Keeping Kids Busy!

Fun activities for kids from Activity Village Publications!

These ideas have been extracted from “Keeping Kids Busy – over 200 fun activities and entertainments for kids!” which is available for download in e-book format from Activity Village Publications (www.ActivityVillagePublications.co.uk) at just \$4.95.

The book is aimed at kids aged 6 and up (although many activities are suitable for younger children with adult supervision) and has been written so that older children can read it and find inspiration themselves.

Indoor ideas:

Sort through the toy cupboard:

It's surprising how much fun this can be! Get everyone together and aim to clear one shelf or drawer. You will probably find that old treasures are rediscovered, odd pieces can be thrown away, and some things will be ready to be passed down or sold. If you are not sure whether to get rid of some of the toys, try packing them away in a box and hiding them in a dark corner of the cupboard for a few months. When they come out again they will either cause a sensation or not, which will make it easy to decide!

Have a pillow fight:

Make sure you use old pillows and don't use feathers if someone in the house is allergic to them, though!

Make a story tape:

Grab that tape recorder and a blank cassette, find a story you enjoy, and make your own story tape! Each child can read for a while, or can take on the part of a particular character. Make the appropriate noises too! You will probably have to practice a few times to get the hang of it, and be prepared for lots and lots of giggles! Tip: a home-made story tape makes a great present for a child who has to go to hospital or is bedridden for a time.

Record the sounds around you:

Get out the tape recorder and make a project out of recording everyday sounds. Try water running in the bath, someone ringing the bell and opening the door, flushing the toilet! It certainly makes you think about things a little differently than usual! Suggest that some friends or neighbours do the same thing and then get together to see if you can identify each other's sounds!



Have a jigsaw afternoon:

Get out all your jigsaws and invite some friends around with theirs too! Clear plenty of space and have a marathon jigsaw session! Some libraries have jigsaws you can borrow too, and you can often find jigsaws for sale very cheaply at charity shops (thrift stores) and car boot sales (garage sales). Tip: if you buy your jigsaws second-hand and the box has seen better days, cut out the picture and store it in a ziploc bag with all the pieces.

Have a mammoth junk modelling session with friends:

Invite a few families around and ask them to bring their craft-cupboard junk with them – boxes, containers, and other bits and pieces. You provide glue, sticky-tape, scissors, and encouragement. You could make houses, or creatures, or boats, or modern art – or you could all combine together to make one giant model!

Play card games:

Get out some old playing cards and have a game! Try snap or racing demon or beggar my neighbour – all traditional games which are just lots of fun! If you need more inspiration we have a new e-book coming out soon – Card Games for Kids – check back at www.ActivityVillagePublications.co.uk or subscribe to our free weekly newsletter (www.activityvillage.co.uk/free_newsletter.htm) to be informed when it is released.

Make a fishing game:

Cut fish shapes out of cardboard or craft foam and attach a paper clip to each “nose”. Make fishing rods out of garden canes and string, and tie a small magnet to each end. See how many fish you can catch! Older kids can write a number on the underneath of each fish which will be their score when they catch it.



Play sardines:

You will need a group of children for this – mixed ages works best. One child goes to hide and the others split up to search for him. When they find him, they must try to hide in the same place with him! Warning - this game results in much giggling!

Play dice:

There are many excellent dice games which can be played by kids together, needing very little apart from the dice and paper and pencil for scoring. To get you started why not download a free game from our e-book, Dice Games for Little Kids? You will find it at Activity Village Publications (www.activityvillagepublications.co.uk).

Alphabetical order game:

You need a quizmaster for this game, and some willing contestants with pencil and paper at the ready! The quizmaster calls out a selection of words and the contestants rush to put them into alphabetical order. Here are some ideas to get you started:

Days of the week

Months of the year

A selection of animals, colours, kitchen equipment etc

Numbers 1 to 10

Bowling:

Save empty plastic soda bottles until you have 10. Line them up and see how many you can knock down again with a tennis ball!



Blow football:

Can you find a table-tennis ball and a large flat table? Have a game of blow football! Find a friend, put the ball in the middle, and stand at opposite edges of the table. Now blow! See who can get the ball to fall over the other player's edge most often and declare them the winner!

Battleships:

Battleships is a traditional game for two players, who will each need a paper and pencil. First draw a grid about 8 squares tall and wide. Label the grid with the numbers 1 to 8 along the bottom and letters A to H along the sides. Make sure that each player's grid is the same! Then, making sure that the other player cannot see what you are doing, mark "your fleet" onto your grid. An aircraft carrier is five squares in one straight line; a battleship four squares in one straight line, a cruiser three squares in one straight line. Each fleet should also have two destroyers (two adjacent squares) and two submarines (single squares). Now try to find your opponent's fleet by calling out a position on the grid (eg D4 or H8). He must tell you whether you have a "hit" or a "miss", or if you have sunk a craft (and if so, which craft it is). The first player to sink his opponent's fleet is the winner.



If you would prefer not to draw your own grids each time, you can find a free printable version of Battleships at Activity Village, here: <http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/battleships.htm>

Learn to knit:

Knitting is great fun for all kids – boys and girls – and if you stick to simple stitches is easy to learn too. It takes very little time to make a scarf for a favourite Action Man or Barbie or teddy, and not much more to make a blanket for a doll's cot or a sleeping bag for a toy which wants to go on a sleep-over or camping trip! The best way to learn to knit is to find someone to teach you – and grandmothers are always a good place to start! If you can't find someone easily, then have a look at this website instead:

http://www.learntoknit.com/instructions_kn.php3

Make a map of the neighbourhood:

Have you ever tried making a map? You have to imagine that you are a bird flying high in the sky and looking down – what would your neighbourhood look like from up there? See if you can draw what the bird would see. Mark your house and your garden, and perhaps your neighbours' houses too. Where does the road go?

If you find it too difficult to draw your neighbourhood, try drawing a plan of the room you are in instead. You don't have to imagine being a bird now – just pretend you are stuck to the ceiling by the back of your trousers and while you are up there, take note of what you see! First draw the outline of the room, then use rectangles, squares and circles to represent the furniture and rugs. Where are the doors and windows? Mark these too. You can try doing this with a friend: each draw your own plan and then compare notes to see if you agree!



Kitchen Table Ideas

Make pasta necklaces:

Colour some macaroni or other tube-like pasta by putting it into a ziplock bag with a few drops of food colouring and a few drops of rubbing alcohol or surgical spirit (with adult supervision please). Pour it out onto a baking sheet and leave to dry. Make several colours if you can. Thread the pasta onto string to make necklaces.

Make balloon people:

Blow up balloons – not too much! Put the fastened-off bit at the top, then use felt-tip pens to draw on features, and stick on paper legs and hands if you wish. Attach short lengths of cotton (thread) and tie your balloon people up in a row to make a cheerful display that everyone will love!



Outdoor ideas

Find some ducks to feed:

Feeding ducks is fun and therapeutic! Take some old crusts of bread, tear them up into tiny pieces, and see if you can give each and every duck their fair share!



Have a doughnut-eating contest:

Using ring doughnuts, tie the doughnuts loosely with kitchen string and suspend in the garden from a washing line or low branch. With your hands behind your back, line up in front of a doughnut, and start the race! You will need plenty of damp towels for clean-up time afterwards!

Paint the patio with chalk:

Get out the coloured chalk and create some art on the patio or pavement. Warn younger children that the paintings will wash off soon or they may be dismayed when their great creations disappear!

Practice your throwing and catching:

You can almost never have enough catching practice! Use balls and bean bags. Throw over-arm and under-arm. Throw to and fro, around in a circle, at a target, against a wall, and up in the air!

There are lots of throwing and catching games you can play too. What about pig in the middle, if there are three of you? Or, if you have plenty of people and space, try this one: Stand in a ring with one person in the middle. He throws a bean bag as high as he can into the air, and while it is in the air all the other players run as far as they can away from him. When the bean bag lands he shouts “stop!” and all players must freeze. He then runs to where the bean bag lands, picks it up, and tries to throw it at one of the players. If he can reach someone and the bean bag hits them, they must be the next in the middle.

Play with water:

Dress in swim-suits and fill up the paddling pool or any large plastic containers you have – the more the merrier! Set the sprinkler going and get out all the water-pistols you can find. Have fun! Don't forget to supervise little children at all times if there is water about.



Twenty Toys You Don't Have to Buy

By Colleen Moulding

Fed up with forking out for the latest piece of over-hyped plastic? Answer “What can we do now Mum?” by making toys from items you will already have around the house.



Shops

Save all your empty grocery cartons for a week or so and you'll soon have a shop any aspiring grocer would be proud of. Gluing down the flaps makes cereal boxes, jelly packets etc. look unopened. Clothes, shoes, and toys can all be used as “stock”. Paper bags and real or play money add to the fun.



Paper balls

When the kids keep arguing suggest that they throw something at each other! Paper balls are easily scrunched up from torn out magazine pages to make “ammunition”. When it's time to tidy up, stand the waste paper basket in the middle of the room and see who can throw the most in. A rolled up magazine makes a good “bat” too.

Doctors/Nurses

A roll of white toilet tissue makes this game much more fun as Dads, Grans, teddies or dolls are mummified before your eyes. Plastic medicine spoons and cardboard box hospital beds for toys are extra props that make the game last longer.

Tubes

Cardboard tubes from kitchen roll or foil make instant telescopes for sailors or pirates, or tunnels to roll marbles through. Babies love to watch things disappear then reappear out of the bottom. Don't leave them alone with the cardboard tube though as they will probably suck it.

Cardboard Boxes

Cardboard boxes must be about the best free toys you can get hold of. Push in the ends of large ones to make tunnels and caves to crawl through. Draw on windows and doors with felt tip pens to make a house, add a flag and portholes for a boat or paper plates and a steering wheel for a car.

Miniature gardens

The foil trays that pies and prepared foods arrive in make lovely containers for miniature gardens. The children can enjoy hunting around the park or garden for twigs to make trees, moss for a lawn, stones to arrange as a rockery or a waterfall. Keep twigs or stones where you want them with a little blue tack or plasticine. Add toy people or animals and maybe a little water if the container is watertight. This can be a very creative and enjoyable exercise if you have children of very different age groups to entertain. A variation is



to use play sand (not builder's sand - it stains everything yellow) to make a beach scene, maybe adding shells, stones and a blue paper sea.

Paper puppets

A picture of anything - colourful bird, clown's face, animal or cartoon character, carefully cut out by an adult and stuck to the top of a strip of card about five inches long and one and a half inches wide becomes a very easily made puppet. These give such pleasure and are so easy to make that you will probably end up with dozens of them. Magazine pictures can be stuck on to folded card to make theatre set background and wings.

Potato prints

After cutting a potato in half, draw on a simple shape. A triangle, circle or star perhaps. Cut away the rest of the potato, leaving a shape to dip into paint and print on to paper.

Skittles

Skittles can be improvised from large plastic cola or lemonade bottles. A little sand or water in the bottom makes them more stable. A good game for learning to count.

Dens

Building a den must be one of the most memorable parts of childhood as we all seem to recall the bliss of blankets draped over the airing rack in the garden or over the backs of chairs indoors. Even today's sophisticated kids seem to find the thought much more exciting than just erecting the shop bought plastic play house. I think the secret is to give structural advice about making the thing stay upright, but let the children do as much as possible themselves. Really large boxes of the type that washing machines and fridges come in can be had for the asking from the big electrical goods retailers and are useful for rooms within dens. Indoors, one of the simplest dens can be made by throwing a large sheet or duvet over a table. Cushions, torches, biscuits and comics or books will all be needed at the housewarming.

String

Children find a million uses for string, from tying up toy "baddies" to making a washing line for doll's clothes. It can be tied to chair legs to make a jump, dipped into paint and twirled on to paper, plaited, knitted with, made into a parachute or mobile, used as a measuring aid or for learning how to tie shoelaces and bows. It need never linger in the kitchen drawer again.

Sewing cards

Stick a picture on to a postcard or draw a simple duck, car or teddy shape. With a bodkin needle push holes around the outline of your design about one inch apart. Using brightly coloured wool in the bodkin or a long bootlace, thread in and out of the holes.



Stilts

You need to do a little drilling for this one. Take two strong tins, coffee or clean paint tins are ideal, and drill a hole about one inch from the top on opposite sides of the tin. Insert a length of string and knot securely. Check that the handle is at a comfortable length for the child before knotting the other side. These are always very popular, but never leave young children alone with them especially near stairs or steps.

Cafes

Children's tea sets are a handy prop for this game, but a picnic set or microwave cookware is just as good. Giving the waiter/waitress a little notebook and pencil to take orders and making a tall white hat from a cylinder of paper for the chef will add realism. Sit dolls and teddies around as well as willing Aunts and Grannies for extra customers.

Playdough

Mix together two cups of flour, one cup of salt, one cup of water, one tablespoon of oil and a few drops of food colouring for an easy to make dough that will keep for about three weeks if you wrap it in polythene and keep it in the fridge. All you have to do is knead the mixture well. Divide the mixture up first if you have more than one colour available.

Obstacle course

An obstacle course can turn a rainy day into an adventure. Use whatever you have available. A bench to walk the plank, cushion stepping stones across shark infested seas, through a cardboard box tunnel, up a chair mountain or through a duvet cave. The wilder your imagination the more your children will love it.

Easy boats

Recycle your empty margarine cartons. Use them as boats for the bath or paddling pool. These are so easy that even very young children can help to make them. Cut out triangular sail shapes from white or coloured paper. Make a small hole at the top and bottom of the sail so that you can push through a straw to make a mast. Let the child fix this to the bottom of a clean margarine tub with a lump of blue tack or plasticine. They sail extremely well and will even take a couple of toy people on an exciting cruise.



Capes

Nurses, kings, queens, Batman, Superman - they all need capes or cloaks. Luckily they are easy to make by attaching ribbon ties to an oblong of fabric in the colour of your child's favourite caped character. Keep an eye on them though as anything tied around the neck could be dangerous.

Leaf art


Collect leaves and draw around them. This is fun for little ones and an educational tree identification game for older children. Colour in the details with crayons or paints. The leaves could then be stuck on to paper collage style or dipped into paint and then pressed firmly on to paper for a lovely leaf print.



Make a puzzle

Stick a favourite picture on to card and allow to dry with a heavy book on top. Cut into pieces, how many depending on the age of the child, for an almost instant and personal puzzle.

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Colleen Moulding is a freelance writer based in the South of England. She is also owner/editor of All That Women Want.com
<http://www.allthatwomenwant.com> a magazine, web guide and resource for women everywhere. Channels for home, parenting, computing, travel, food, fashion, entertainment, seasonal sites, what kids want, shopping, books and writing, working from home, women's business, antiques, something different and lots more. Subscribe to the free monthly e-zine by sending a blank e-mail to: allthatwomenwant-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Summertime Crafts for Kids



by Rachel Paxton

Kids, crafts, nature, and sun all go together to make a great combination for a bunch of fun! Follow these instructions for some summer crafts.



Rock Paperweights

Give each child a rock that has been washed with soap and dried. Have the children decorate the rocks with craft paint to create their own unique paperweights.

Masks

Cut 8 ½ x 11 pieces of paper in half. Give each child a piece of paper and a crayon or marker. Have each child fold their piece of paper in half and cut a hole that their nose will fit through. Have them cut a small hole first, then adjust the hole to fit the size of their nose. Have the children try on their masks and let them try to figure out where the eyes should go. They can then cut out holes for the eyes. Let the children decorate their masks with different facial expressions.

Jigsaw Puzzles

Give each child a piece of cardboard, a picture from a magazine, some scissors, and some glue. Have the children glue their pictures onto their cardboard. When the glue is dry, have them cut their cardboard into the shape of jigsaw puzzle pieces. When they have finished, have them trade puzzles and have a race to see who finishes first.

Graph Paper Drawings

Give each child a sheet of graph paper and a pen or pencil. Have each child draw a picture on the graph paper using only the lines on the graph paper. Curved lines are not allowed. Let the children color their creations. Have them share their pictures with each other when they are done.

Collages

Give each child newspapers, scissors, glue, and notebook paper. Have each child cut words and sentences from newspaper pages and combine them to create a unique

story. Have them arrange their sentences on the notebook paper and glue them in place. A theme for the stories can be decided beforehand. Let the children share their stories with each other.

Flubber

1 1/2 cups warm water
2 cups white school glue
1 1/3 cups warm water
3 teaspoons Borax
Food coloring

Mix 1 1/2 cups warm water, glue, and food coloring together. In a separate bowl, mix 1 1/3 cups warm water and Borax together. Pour the glue mixture into the Borax mixture and take out of bowl to knead until flubber is soft and consistent in form. Store in a zip-lock bag or tightly sealed container. This stuff is really fun! Enjoy!



Rachel Paxton is a freelance writer and mom who is the author of the Creative Homemaking Recipe of the Week Club Cookbook, a cookbook containing more than 250 quick easy dinner ideas. To order visit Creative Homemaking <http://www.creativehomemaking.com> and the Home and Garden section of Suite 101 <http://www.suite101.com>.

Easy Treat Gifts for Kids to Give

By Brenda Hyde

Giving treats to our family and friends is always a nice touch for birthday, holidays or just to say thank you. We have some special recipes that can be made by children with just a little help if they are younger. Teaching children how to make and give gifts is something they will always remember and pass down to their own children in the future. These recipes are a wonderful place to start.



Cocoa Butter Balls

2/3 cup butter (softened)
3/4 cup powdered sugar
3 tablespoons cocoa powder
1 tablespoon milk or water
1/2 tsp. vanilla
2 cups oatmeal
1/2 to 3/4 cup powdered sugar for coating



Blend butter and sugar. Blend cocoa, water and vanilla. Add cocoa mixture to butter mixture and blend thoroughly. Add oatmeal and blend with hands. Form into ball, 3/4 inch in diameter. Chill mixture as necessary to make shaping easier. Place additional powdered sugar in bowl. Drop balls into sugar. Roll to coat. Place on plate; refrigerate until firm, about one hour. Makes 36 balls.

Chocolate Sugarplums

1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips, melted
1/2 cup confectioners sugar
1/4 cup light corn syrup
1/3 cup water, plus 1 tsp. rum or almond extract
2 1/2 cups finely crushed vanilla wafer crumbs
1 cup pecans, crushed
1/2 cup granulated sugar

Line cookie sheets or trays with waxed paper. Melt chips in microwave, starting with 25 seconds, stirring and going again for 10 seconds each time, then stirring again until melted. In a medium sized bowl, mix melted chips, confectioners sugar, corn syrup and water with extract with a wooden spoon. Stir in cookie crumbs and pecans until blended. Shape by rounded teaspoonfuls into balls. (if too crumbly add a tiny amount of water). Roll in granulated sugar. Place on cookie sheets. Store in airtight container.

S'more Mix

2 cups honey graham cereal
1 cup tiny marshmallows
1 cup peanuts
1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1/2 cup raisins, or chocolate covered raisins

Mix all ingredients in a large plastic bag. Tightly close bag and shake well. To give as gifts divide the mix into small plastic or cellophane bags, and tie with a pretty ribbon and gift tag.

Maple Squares

3/4 cup peanut butter
1/2 cup maple syrup
1 1/2 cups nonfat dry milk powder
about 2 tablespoons chopped peanuts

Mix the peanut butter and maple syrup until well blended. Add the milk powder, stir well. Spread the mixture into a loaf pan. Pat it down to make an even layer. Sprinkle the peanuts over the mixture and press gently. Chill 1 hour. Cut into 1 inch squares. Keep covered and chilled until you serve. Makes about 32 squares.



Gift Wrapping Your Treats

Once you have made your treats here are several ways you can package them to give away:

Decorated brown paper lunch sacks with fabric hearts or shapes. Place your treat in a plastic bag then into your gift bag. Staple shut and add a gift tag.

Place your treats in interesting tins that you can find at thrift stores. Be sure to wash the tins in hot soapy water first, dry and place waxed paper in the bottom of the tin before you put in the treats.

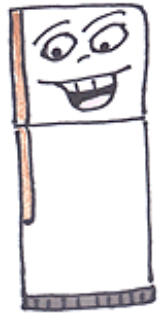
Small wicker baskets are great for holding treats. They can be found at craft stores, or thrift stores. Be sure to wash baskets with a stiff brush in warm, soapy water if they have been used. Place your treats in a plastic or cellophane bag, tie with bow and place in your basket. You can also line the basket with tissue or fabric before placing in treats.

For more kid's crafts, nature games, recipes and fun visit The Treehouse at <http://seedsofknowledge.com/treehouse.htm>

What To Do When the Fridge Just Won't Hold Anymore!

10 Functional & Creative Uses for School Artwork by Rachel Webb

What do you do when the fridge just won't hold anymore? No, I'm not talking about food, I'm referring to Artwork! You know, those cherished pictures every child brings home, insists it's their favorite and on the fridge it goes! Can you just throw them away when the child is not looking? Not in my family.



My dear mother has saved my kindergarten artwork in a box for over 25 years! So how does a mother keep her home organized and still display and enjoy her children's artistic efforts? First get them off the fridge or out of the box and try some of these creative ideas.



1. Take a picture

Line up the best pictures and craft projects and take a picture! The artwork can be tossed but you still have a record of them. Photo albums are more accessible to enjoy and much easier to store than boxes. If you store the pictures in a acid free sheet protector, your pictures will even outlast the original artwork.

2. Original scrapbook paper

Scan or color copy one of the artwork pictures onto acid free cardstock and use it as a background paper for a scrapbook page or make a headline for your page by tracing your letters out of the color copy and cutting them out!

3. Handmade seasonal placemats

Mount several seasonal pictures to a large piece of colored cardstock. Use matching background paper to coordinate with you other holiday decorations. After having your child sign and date the back, laminate the placemats for easy cleanup and durability. I used this idea for our cub-scout blue and gold banquet and they were a hit!

4. Create custom art calendars

Purchase inexpensive calendars and glue your child's artwork to the generic picture. Matching seasonal pictures with the appropriate month makes a great gift for grandparents and uses up 12 pictures quickly and creatively!

5. Mailing Envelopes

Everyone mails arts and crafts to extended family, so this time let the kids fold their artwork into the envelope! Take apart an old envelope to use as a pattern and use a 2" white label so that the address can be easily found and identified by the post office.

6. Merchandise

Many office supply stores offer services to turn your photo's into custom mousepads, mugs, clocks, quilt blocks or t-shirts. Instead of using the child's photograph, take a picture of the art to display on the merchandise. Some tile shops will turn your child's art into bathroom wall tiles or <http://www.jigsawpuzzle.com> offers photo puzzles in a variety of sizes and shapes from a few pieces to many and they are surprisingly affordable! This often takes 2-4 weeks to get your product back, so plan early if the kids want to do this as a Christmas gift or unique Mothers Day idea.

7. Frame it

The most obvious idea can also provide a great storage option. Choose a favorite art piece to frame then as new favorite pictures arrive from school, put the new one over the old picture.



8. Wrapping paper

Use large artwork for wrapping gifts for giving to grandparents and children's birthday parties. Cut out greeting cards to match. This is a great money saving tip too! If you want paper that has a more retail look www.artfulgiving.com lets you customize your gift wrap with your own saying or downloaded picture!

9. Decoupage teacher gifts

Adhere art to pillar candles or terracotta planters for a useful and practical gift!

10. Original checkbook covers

Purchase a blank clear checkbook cover or remove the pre-printed insert of an existing cover to attach your own picture. The important thing is to let your children see that you are proud of their talent and creative efforts!

Rachel Webb designs decorative large Magnetic Fridge Calendars as a way to work at home with her 4 children. Her calendars are made entirely out of heavy duty magnet, guaranteed not to slide off when the kids slam the fridge door! Great Gift Idea! Visit her site: <http://www.Note-ables.com> or email Rachel@Note-Ables.com