

50 Boredom Busters

When cries of “I’m bored!” echo through your house, get excited, not frustrated. Unstructured free time allows kids the down time they need to explore, dream, create, learn, play, and relax.

Encourage kids to use their imagination to come up with something fun to do. But if they get stuck, hand them this list to jumpstart their thinking. (The list includes ideas for a variety of ages, from preschoolers to teens. For pre-readers, simply read a few ideas aloud to see what sparks their interest.)

NOTE FOR KIDS: Play it safe and check with a parent before visiting any websites recommended here.

1. **Create a new board game** based on something you love – horses, cars, baseball, New York City, gardening, music, art, skateboarding, food, airplanes, a favorite book or movie, etc.
2. **Invent a new dance** while you listen to music. Practice your new moves and perform later for your family.
3. **Build something.** Gather some safe supplies and recycled materials you can use. Some ideas: clean, empty cereal boxes, milk cartons, and yogurt containers; paper clips; rubber bands; string; plastic cups; empty paper towel tubes; aluminum foil; duct tape; shoeboxes.
4. **Redesign the cover of your favorite book or CD.** Experiment with a variety of new images, color, words and layout.
5. **Get active.** Go solo or invite a friend to shoot hoops, play badminton, throw a football, jump rope, ride bikes or scooters, skateboard, or kick a soccer ball.
6. **Read a book and interact with it.** Write a review, create a sculpture of the main character, design a map of the book’s setting, illustrate a favorite scene, or write a new ending.
7. **Conduct a science experiment.** Get a book of experiments from the library and do an activity that interests you. Or visit www.tryscience.org for both online and offline experiments.
8. **Plant some flowers or vegetables** in a container or in the yard. Or design a garden to attract butterflies or hummingbirds.
9. **Create a learning notebook** about something you want to know more about. As you explore your topic, include drawings, photos, maps, quotations, books you’ve read or want to read, websites, trivia, reports, fact sheets, lists, timelines, observations, etc.
10. **Create a secret code** for your brother, sister or friend to figure out.
11. **Make a gift for someone.** Use whatever talents you have – cooking, woodworking, singing, writing, sewing, inventing, dancing, playing the guitar, gardening, drawing, etc.
12. **Get musical.** Craft a new song, complete with melody and lyrics. Rewrite the words to a song you know. Create an advertising jingle for your favorite toy, book or hobby.
13. **Play with tangrams,** a traditional Chinese puzzle. Read *Grandfather Tang’s Story* by Ann Tompert, which includes a tangram that you can trace or photocopy. For a printable tangram, visit: <http://math.about.com/od/geometry/ss/tangram.htm>. To solve online tangram puzzles, visit <http://pbskids.org/cyberchase/games/area/tangram.html>.
14. **Plan a menu for tonight’s dinner.** Create placemats for the table, too!
15. **Get creative.** Write a poem, short story, play, stand-up comedy routine, autobiography, or a biography about your best friend.
16. **Listen to an audiobook** (tape, CD or mp3 download).
17. **Enjoy simple outdoor pleasures** – watch cloud formations, blow bubbles, identify backyard birds, fly a kite, or draw with sidewalk chalk.
18. **Make Top 10 lists** of ... places you want to visit, your favorite book or movie characters, sports you want to try, people you would love to meet, your favorite snacks, etc.

19. **Work on puzzle books** such as Sudoku, mazes, word jumbles, brainteasers or crossword puzzles.
20. **Construct something with building toys** such as Legos, Tinkertoys, K'Nex, Lincoln Logs or plain, old wooden blocks.
21. **Design a scavenger hunt** – for the house, the backyard or a family walk in the neighborhood.
22. **Make some puppets** (out of paper bag or an old pair of socks) and put on a puppet show for your family.
23. **Make predictions about something** (what time the phone will ring, how many times you can jump on one foot in a minute, who will be the next person in the house to talk, ANYTHING!) and then test it.
24. **Get artsy.** Create a sculpture out of objects around the house. Model something out of clay. Break out the crayons or markers and doodle in a sketch pad. Draw a self-portrait. Paint a picture. Create a mobile and hang it in your room.
25. **Create an obstacle course.** Set it up either indoors or outside, depending on where you have the most space and supplies. Time yourself to see how fast (or how slow) you can make it through the course.
26. **Invent some new Smoothie recipes.** Gather or buy the ingredients, mix your creations and hold a taste test for your family.
27. **Practice tying different kinds of knots.** (You can find examples in a Scouting handbook or see virtual demonstrations at www.animatedknots.com.)
28. **Design a fitness routine** that you will stick to for at least the next 30 days. Chart your progress to see how you improve.
29. **Do a good deed.** Do some yard work for an elderly neighbor. Babysit for a busy mom or play with her kids so she can get some work done. Water plants for a family on vacation. Walk and feed the dog for someone who works long hours.
30. **Play “Guess What Country I’m Thinking Of”** by giving others a few clues, such as the continent, capital, monetary unit, famous cities, etc. (You can substitute any topic for “country,” such as animal, sport, author, musician, etc., and give related clues.)
31. **Write in a journal.** What can you include in your journal? Anything! Photos, lists of movies you want to see, goals, things you’re worried about, things you’re proud of, drawings, fabric swatches, sketches or diagrams, inspirational quotations, etc.
32. **Play store.** Gather items from around the house, display them for your “customers,” make price tags, and use real or play money. Invite family members to go on a shopping spree.
33. **Draw and label a map** of ... your room, your house, your neighborhood, your state, your country, another country or a make-believe island you create.
34. **Interview someone.** Using a tape/voice recorder, pretend you’re a newspaper reporter and interview a friend, neighbor or family member.
35. **Build a model of something** – a car, a building, a city, a space shuttle.
36. **Design a postcard for the town where you live.** Take a photo or draw a picture of an interesting place in your town.
37. **Learn about a famous** artist, civil rights leader, composer, entrepreneur, politician, scientist or religious figure. Give your family a mini-presentation of your findings.
38. **Organize group games** for friends and neighbors – kickball, freeze tag, ultimate Frisbee, Wiffleball, Red Rover, hopscotch, double-dutch, four-square, etc.
39. **Write a letter to a friend or relative.** No texts or e-mails allowed today – do it the old-fashioned way.
40. **Pretend to be ...** a Jedi fighter, a princess, a pirate, a parent, a firefighter, a teacher, the President, a rock star, an astronaut. Use your imagination!
41. **Create a salt dough map of your home state or favorite country.** (For an easy recipe and directions, visit www.geomatters.com/geography_fun/details.asp?ID=5.)
42. **Revise a familiar story.** Put a twist on books you’ve read by changing the plot, setting or characters. Either act out the new story or write and illustrate it. Or, use characters from a book you’ve already read and make up a completely new adventure.
43. **Learn one new word today** – know what it means and how to spell it. Use the new word at least three times today.
44. **Craft a poster** about ... your favorite animals, places you want to visit in the world, your favorite things (foods, sports, friends, etc.).
45. **Start a nature scrapbook.** Use it to draw and write about plants, bugs, animals, clouds, birds, weather patterns, etc. Include photos you’ve taken of critters you see in your backyard.
46. **Create a photo collage** using old magazines and catalogs. Pick a theme of a favorite topic – sports, animals, travel – cut out your images and glue them to a large piece of paper or poster board.
47. **Make an indoor tent.** Get a large blanket or bed sheet and drape it over two chairs spread apart. Spread some pillows around for comfort, grab a flashlight and tell ghost stories.
48. **Write love notes** to your mom, dad or sibling and hide the notes for family members to find later.
49. **Play your own version of Pictionary.** Gather several players, with each person writing one word on a small slip of paper. Fold the papers and put them in a cup. One player chooses a paper, silently reads the word and draws it. The other players try to guess what the word is. Whoever guesses correctly gets to choose and draw next.
50. **Design your own marble mazes** using empty cardboard rolls (from paper towels, toilet paper, gift wrap, etc.) and masking tape. Use small, rubber balls if you don’t own marbles.