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home alone

Boredom buster guide

HOME ALONE PLAN
for kids
& PARENTS

If you have a plan to prevent boredom, your children's experience of being home alone will go smoother, and they will become more self-reliant. In addition, developing a plan for spending home alone time teaches them to plan future activities.

Preparing for self-care

When children are learning to stay home alone, it is important to have a plan in place for when boredom strikes. A plan increases confidence levels in children so they feel in control of their situation, and it reduces stress for both children and parents. Use the following ideas to develop your own guide.

Activities

Review ideas for acceptable activities together using sources from magazines, books, internet, library, and school. Here are a few examples to get you started:

Magazines

- FamilyFun
- Wondertime
- Cookie
- Parent & Child
- Ask
- Jack & Jill
- Highlights
- High Five

Books

Disney's FamilyFun Crafts: 500 Creative Activities for You and Your Kids by Deanna F. Cook

365 Activities for Fitness, Food, and Fun for the Whole Family by Julia Sweet

365 Unplugged Family Fun Activities: A Year's Worth of Ideas for TV-Free, Video-Free, and Computer Game-Free Entertainment by Steven J. Bennett and Ruth Bennett

Weekends with the Kids: Activities, Crafts, Recipes, and Hundreds of Ideas for Family Fun by Sara Perry and Quentin Bacon

Family Fun and Activities by Margaret Elizabeth Mulac

UW Extension
University of Wisconsin-Extension

Internet sites

www.amazingmoms.com/htm/boredom_busters.htm

www.activityvillage.co.uk/kids_crafts.htm

www.drawbooks.com/artschool/

www.loiswalker.com/puppets.html

www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/

www.myfreecolouringpages.com/online_fuzzy_felt.htm

www.paperairplanes.co.uk/

space.jpl.nasa.gov/

www.gameskidsplay.net/

www.funology.com/

frugalliving.about.com/od/frugalfun/tp/Boredom_Busters_for_Kids.htm

Games and activities

Here are some examples of age-appropriate games, arts, crafts, and activities. Decide which ones are suitable for your children. Determine how long the children can do the activity, where the activity should take place, the clean-up process, and the schedule.

General interest

Candyland©

Chutes and Ladders©

Connect Four©

Don't Break the Ice©

Don't Spill the Beans©

Hi Ho Cherry-O©

Perfection ©

Twister©

Memory Game©

Trouble©

Operation©

8 years and older

Aggravation©

Clue©

Boggle©

Yahtzee©

Scrabble©

Jenga©

Monopoly©

Slapagory©

Taboo for Kids©

Trivial Pursuit Junior©

Battleship©

Uno©

Tripoley©

Pictionary©

One person games and activities

Spider solitaire and solitaire

100- to 1000-piece puzzles

K'Nex© Pieces

Legos© set

Arts and crafts

Some of the following activities can be prepared as a family ahead of time. Children can use them while they are home alone.

Sock and toss game

- Two large pieces of cardboard or wood (at least 18 x 24 inches)
- String or locking plastic ties
- Scissors and masking tape
- Unmatched socks
- Dried beans, lentils, or rice
- Permanent black marker or paint with brush

Draw five circles on the front of one of the boards. Space them as equally apart as possible. Cut out the circles. Near each of the circles, draw or paint point values and let dry. Next, cut three small holes at the top of the two large pieces of wood or cardboard. Tie both pieces of wood or cardboard together using the string or ties. Once they are tied together pull the boards slightly apart and stand it up on the floor so it is like a sandwich board. Now make the bean bags. Fill an old, holeless sock with about 1 cup of dry beans, lentils, or rice. Tie the end of the sock shut and tighten as much as possible. Cut off excess material. With a piece of tape mark a spot on the floor where players will stand to throw the sock bean bags through the holes in the board. Play this game individually or with others.

Homemade playing dough

$2^3/_4$ cups flour

3 cups water

1 Tbsp. cream of tartar

$1^2/_3$ cups salt

2 Tbsp. vegetable oil

food coloring (optional)

Mix all ingredients in a large pan. Cook over medium heat until the dough comes away from the edges of the pan and starts to form a ball. Remove from heat. When cool enough to touch, knead on counter top until smooth. Store in an air-tight container.

Recycled art

- poster paper or tag board
- glue sticks or liquid glue
- old magazines, cards, or pictures
- safe scissors
- glitter pens or fun markers
- string

The object of this activity is to create art out of everyday items. Go through the pile of magazines, pictures, and cards to pick and cut out favorite pictures. Glue the choices to the poster paper in any configuration. It provides instant art for the bedroom!

Natural artwork

Collecting outdoor materials is a fun and enjoyable activity. For example, during the summer collect beautiful flowers or in the fall collect leaves at the peak of their color. Press leaves or flowers in a large book for drying so they will retain their shape and still be usable. You can collect rocks, seashells, or wood from places you have visited.

Natural artwork can be displayed in different ways depending upon what was collected. Rocks, sand, seashells and other outdoor things can be displayed beautifully in any type of glass container with a lid. Decorate the lid with paint, string, buttons, or other things glued to it. Leaves and flowers can be displayed in plastic document protectors, wax papers that have the materials ironed between them, or between two pieces of clear contact paper. Let your imagination run completely wild with this one!

When hunger hits

Sometimes boredom and hunger happen at the same time, so it is a good idea to have healthy snack ideas already in mind. It is also very important for safety; your children need to know which appliances are acceptable to use. Here are some easy, healthy snack ideas that require little or no cooking. Be sure to have all ingredients on hand for the agreed upon snacks.

Plain peanut butter balls

1/2 cup peanut butter

1/2 cup honey or powdered sugar

1 cup graham cracker crumbs

2 tablespoons powdered milk

Mix all ingredients until well blended. Roll into balls. Refrigerate to set. Add coconut, chocolate chips, or cereal to change the texture and flavor. Just use ¼ cup of the ingredient and reduce the amount of graham cracker crumbs.

Waffle snack sandwich

two frozen waffles (toasted)

peanut butter or other nut butter

jelly or jam

Make just like a regular peanut butter sandwich.

Frozen fruit kabobs

- Use any washed fruits, such as strawberries, grapes, oranges, bananas, or melon.
- Cut fruits into chunks or into separate pieces. Place on toothpicks.
- You can roll or coat fruits in powdered sugar, honey, toasted wheat germ, shredded coconut, or chocolate syrup.
- Place on wax paper and cover. Freeze.

Fresh fruit smoothies

Blend all the listed ingredients for one or two minutes. This snack requires a kitchen appliance, so it should be reserved for older children or prepared ahead of time.

Funky peanut butter monkey

1 banana

1/2 cup vanilla yogurt

dash of milk

1 Tbsp. peanut butter

1/2 cup ice

Peach fizzy

1 whole fresh peach without pit or skin or 1 whole canned peach

1/4 cup orange juice

1/3 cup club soda

1/2 cup ice

Double berry blast

1 cup strawberries

1/2 cup raspberries

1/4 cup of milk

1 cup ice

Strawberry orange slush

1 cup strawberries

3/4 cup orange juice

1 tsp. lemon juice

1 cup ice

Dual orange

1/2 cup vanilla yogurt

1/2 cup mandarin oranges

1/2 cup orange juice

1 cup ice

Apple smiles

- apples
- peanut butter or cream cheese
- raisins

Cut the apples into wedges and spread peanut butter or cream cheese on them. Add a few raisins for flavor. Enjoy!

Wrap sandwiches

- whole wheat flour tortillas
- cream cheese, peanut butter, or cheese spread
- deli-sliced ham, chicken, or turkey
- raisins, grated carrots, or banana

Spread cream cheese, peanut butter, or cheese spread onto tortilla. Place one or two slices of ham, chicken, or turkey over the cream cheese or cheese spread. Or, use raisins, grated carrots, or apple or banana slices with peanut butter. Roll tightly and cut into small rounds. These are fun to eat with a toothpick!