

TIPS FOR FAMILY GAMES AND FUN

The aim of the Families Wellbeing project is for people to feel more connected, sharing ideas to encourage people to maintain and build connections and friendships in their communities. More information about the project can be found at <https://otbds.org/projects/families-wellbeing>

Keeping the family entertained and active without costing a lot of money is difficult at the best of times. And this year it has been harder than ever for many families.

Thinking of different activities and games on your own is hard. We have gathered some suggestions from families we are working with for activities and games at home. Many of the games or activities use things you may have around your home and other activities are free or low cost.

Here are some of the suggestions.

GAMES WITH HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

KIM'S GAME OR THE MEMORY GAME Put an assortment of items on a tray, around 15 to 20 different things. Everyone then tries to memorise all the items. One person removes the tray and takes a few items away and players try to guess what was removed. It's a good game for memory building and can be adapted for different ages and abilities.

INDOOR SCAVENGER HUNT One person draws up a list of house items, say around 10 or 12 things. They ask each player to go and find them and bring them back to a central point like the kitchen. Try and think of things that can be picked up in each room such as a sock, hairbrush, TV remote, cushion, blanket, green toy, and saucepan. This game can also be played outside with the things you would find in a park or garden such as blade of grass, leaf, stick, feather, dandelion head and pebble.

BUILD AN INDOOR DEN Use household items, such as old sheets, blankets and towels and hang over chairs and tables. Clothes pegs and indoor drying racks work well too.

CREATIVE AND MESSY PLAY

Kids love nothing better than getting messy! To make it easier to contain the mess and to clean up – first put down plastic sheeting, old sheets or newspapers.

FEET AND HANDS You could paint or draw around your feet, or hands or draw portraits of each other.

LEAF PRINTING Collect different sizes and shapes of leaves, paint one side or dip into paint and press onto paper.

JUNK MODELLING Use old containers such as yogurt pots and cereal or raid the recycling to build a spaceship.

MAKING BUBBLES You can buy bubble mix, but it's also easy to make your own at home. Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup or mug of washing-up liquid or liquid soap, topped up with $\frac{3}{4}$ cup or mug of cold water, then stir in a big spoon of sugar and teaspoon of vegetable oil. You can use anything with a hole or slit in it for a bubble wand.

BUBBLE ART Mix the bubble mixture with paint. Use a straw to blow bubbles and make patterns and then gently cover with paper to make the bubble painting.

PLAY DOUGH You can buy play dough as well. But it's straightforward to make. Mix together about 8 tablespoons of flour - it doesn't matter what kind, with 2 tablespoons of salt. Then begin to add the water - a little bit at a time - about 2-3 tablespoons of warm water. Mix it together until it forms a soft dough you can use. If it's too wet add more flour.

To make fancy play dough, add a few drops of food colouring or glitter to make fairy dough!

SPONGE PAINTING Cut your washing up sponges into various sizes and shapes. Dip into paint and to and print onto the paper to make your own colourful designs.

POTATO STAMPS Wash the potato, dry, cut in half. Draw a shape and cut round the shape. Press the potato stamp into paint and off you go.

THINKING AND TALKING GAMES

IMAGINARY TRAVELLER Taking turns and working through each letter of the alphabet in turn, each person imagines where they might go and what object they want to take along on their trip. For example, “I’m going to Aberdeen and I’m taking my angry alligator.” “I’m going to Birmingham and I’m taking my blue balloon.” It works best when everyone is a bit silly.

FORTUNATELY UNFORTUNATELY This game gets very silly quickly. One player starts a story with a sentence such as “Fortunately, the bus is coming.” The next player counters with a sentence such as, “Unfortunately, it turned into an airplane and flew away!” The next player starts again with “Fortunately...”

NAME FIVE Choose a category such as countries, cities, flowers, animals, and food. Then work your way through the alphabet, with each player naming five things in that category. For example, if animals is the category, the first player may say alligator, antelope, ant, anteater, ape. The next player starts with B: baboon, bee, bear, bullfrog, bird.

TIMED CATEGORIES Use the stopwatch on your phone. Pick a category such as animals, games, plants, purple foods and challenge the family to see how many items they can come up with in that category in one minute. The game can be adapted for different ages and abilities, for example start with Name two and then build from there.

ONE MINUTE CHALLENGES

The one minute challenges can be a good time filler or energiser for when everyone is feeling a bit flat. Or you could set up a few of these challenges and have an overall winner.

“This game is a family favourite for us. We enjoy it because everyone can play and its quick and easy. If we don’t have rubber bands, we use counters out of board games or coins.”

RUBBER BAND SHOOT-OUT How many rubber bands can you shoot into a shoe box or bowl? Make a line on the floor for players to stand behind. You can use different things to make the line. Masking tape works well, but so would stickers or spoons. Adjust the line for age and ability - its probably best to agree this before you start. This game can be adapted to use other household items like teaspoons and pennies.

“This game is a family favourite for us. We enjoy it because everyone can play and its quick and easy. If we don’t have rubber bands, we use counters out of games or coins.”

“We play this a lot. To make it harder we cut a hole in the top of a shoe box and then stood it up on a tray table.”

THE PENNY TOWER Gather up coins and see who can build the highest tower. Coins that are all the same size work very well but it takes more skill to use a variety of coins. You could also time each other and see how many pennies can you stack in a minute?

THE SOCK THROW This is like the rubber band game but using socks. Fold the socks together as pairs with one around the other so they make a ‘ball’ for throwing. Decide on the throwing line or place and move it back for older players. Then see how many socks you can get in the laundry basket in a minute.

“One of our raining day games as children was the sock throw. We used to throw them into a box. I think my mum liked this game because we couldn’t do much damage unlike using a ball inside.”

“We used to have different rounds for the sock throw, such as using the wrong hand, standing on one leg and blind folded.”

BALLOON IN THE AIR Playing with a balloon inside is good fun. Time how long you can keep a balloon from touching the ground. You can use a fly swatter or a rolled-up newspaper or your hands and feet. Build up your own personal best!

CUP TOWERS This works best with plastic beakers or cups. See how many cups you can stack in a minute. You can count the score by number of cups stacked or by number of levels tall.

FOR MORE ACTIVITIES AND GAMES

One way to get more ideas for activities and games is to ask neighbours and friends what games they play, or used to play, and ask them to show you. You could challenge each other and set up a friendly competition.