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INDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR WINTER

By Kerrie McLoughlin



I'm guilty of it, and I admit it. When I'm too overwhelmed or busy or tired to think up an activity to keep my kids busy while I cook dinner, fold laundry, do dishes or those other 1,000 things it takes to keep a household running, I turn on the TV. While that's fine sometimes, I don't want them watching TV all day during the cold winter months! Here are some ideas I've found for keeping kids happy indoors when it's too cold (or too hot, or just plain rainy) to send them outside.

1 HAVE A CARPET PICNIC OR TEA PARTY.

Grab a blanket to lay on the floor (makes it seem like a real picnic plus you save the carpet or floor!). If you have a play teaset, that would work perfectly. If not, just use small cups and plates. We like to have peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that we cut into small pieces or make chocolate chip cookies just for the tea party. You could have the carpet picnic for lunch or dinner for something different and also do a tea party on the same day!

2 BUILD A FORT OR SET UP AN INDOOR TENT.

Fort-building is a blast! Find some parent-approved sheets and blankets and start scouting out the perfect spot. Drape sheets over a large table for a simple fort or get crazy using chairs, other furniture, couch cushions and more. For easier clean-up, of course, the indoor tent is a good choice and is just as much fun. The kids feel all hidden and cozy and may even want to sleep in there for naptime or bedtime.

3 DRAW PICTURES, CREATE CRAFTS, WRITE OR TELL STORIES.

This is the perfect time to drag out the craft box full of pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks, markers, glitter, glue and more. Older kids might want to make up their own story, illustrate it and – voilà – they have their very own book!

4 WRITE OUT PLAYS TO ACT OUT LATER OR HAVE A TALENT SHOW.

The kids might want to write up a play of their own creation or something mimicking a movie. They'll have fun coming up with costumes and props and running their lines. They can open up the box office to "sell" tickets, set up the theatre and put on their play for you and your video recorder!

5 THROW A DANCE PARTY.

Sometimes it's just easy and fun to turn on some music and get goofy. Dance around the house to any kind of music at all. Go up and down the radio dial looking for new songs to move to, or use music you already have loaded onto a computer or iPod set to "shuffle."

6 PLAY "STORE".

Have the kids make their own play money or buy some at a dollar store. Each child can make their own store, and they buy items from each other. Items can include toys they no longer want, trading cards, pictures they have drawn, anything.

7 SET UP A CARDBOARD BOX VILLAGE.

Grocery and other stores often have lots of leftover boxes in all shapes and sizes. Grab a bunch and you have an afternoon of entertainment for the kids. They can decorate the boxes however they like then set them up as homes or stores or let their imagination run wild!



8 PLAY HIDE-AND-SEEK.

Simple but it always works. Kids just love hide-and-seek and can play one-on-one or in teams or one-on-everybody-else. There's even reverse hide-and-seek, where everybody else hides and one person goes to find them all. The first person found is the next "it".

9 BAKE AWAY THE BOREDOM.

Whip up a batch of sugar cookie dough and when it's time to roll those babies out, you know the kids will come runnin'! Cut them out in all shapes and sizes, bake them and later the kids will enjoy frosting and decorating their own creations to take pictures of and eat.

10 PLAY SCHOOL.

Another classic, but kids always love this one. They can all sit at the dining room table or drag smaller tables out to make desks. The kids take turns playing the teacher, and assignments are given using old worksheets or workbooks or just simply by having the kids draw something for the teacher.

If all else fails, put on one of your exercise DVDs and attempt to work out with the kids in the room. They will get a good laugh and you all might get some exercise indoors!