



# Keeping Kids Busy!

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Activity Village Publications

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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](http://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.

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### 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](http://www.ActivityVillagePublications.co.uk) or subscribe to our free weekly newsletter ([www.activityvillage.co.uk/free\\_newsletter.htm](http://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](http://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](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!



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## 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



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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.

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