

Kids' Boredom Busters: Quick, Fun Activities (2 min read)

Summer months are prime time for "informal learning," child development experts say. Brain research shows as children play and pretend, they are re-enacting experiences they've had and trying to make sense of the world.

Here are eight inexpensive summer ideas appropriate for grade school children.

1. Obstacle Course

Cost: Zero

Details: Set up objects to crawl over or walk through in yard or indoor play area. Use lawn chairs, stools, sawhorses, boards, tires or plastic pipes. But pay attention to safety.

2. Kid-Size Tent

Cost: About \$1 apiece for 1-by-2-inch strips of wood, plus \$4 for clothesline.

Details: Lash five poles together into a teepee shape with length of clothesline; drape a sheet around it and fasten with clothespin.

3. Bubbles Aplenty

Cost: \$2 for fly swatter

Details: In a washbasin, mix a gallon of warm water with about 4 tablespoons of dishwashing soap and 1 tablespoon of corn syrup. Dip a new fly swatter into soap and swirl through the air to watch bubbles fly.

4. Nest Building

Cost: Zero

Details: Pretend you're a bird and gather enough twigs and bits of string from yard or park to make a nest.

5. Race Car Box

Cost: Negligible

Details: Find a cardboard box big enough to sit in. Tape a plastic plate to the "dash" as a steering wheel; stick a wooden spoon into a corner as a gearshift.

6. Hallway Bowling

Cost: \$1 to \$2 for art supplies

Details: Using markers, tempera paints and foil, decorate six toilet paper tubes or empty juice cans. Stand them on their ends to form a "V"; knock them over with a tennis ball. Award points for different colors.

7. Buried Treasure

Cost: Minimal

Details: Wrap a small shoebox and lid in foil and fill with costume jewelry, medals or ribbons. Dress up as a pirate and bury it. Draw a map so you can retrieve it later.

8. Flying Saucers

Cost: \$2 for packet of premium paper plates, \$1.50 for bowls, \$1 for glue

Details: Turn one heavy-duty paper plate upside down on another and glue edges together, then glue on an inverted paper bowl. Use markers to draw doors, portholes and insignia. Send it flying.

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