

PRESCHOOL boredom busters



Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven." The preschool parenting phase is certainly no exception. When my children were preschoolers, it was helpful to remember the old adage, "the days are long, but the years are short" to keep perspective.

*This list of Boredom Busters includes some fabulous ideas from my super-creative friend, Wendy Teel (marked with an *). Enjoy these ideas while you can . . . remember the years are short, despite how long the days may currently feel!*

Indoor Fun

HAVE A PICNIC

Have picnics in the living room or any place else in the house to help break up the monotony of a day at home.*

MAKE UP STORIES

Make up stories with trains, dolls, or whatever other toys you have . . . encourage imagination!

PUPPET SHOWS

Do puppet shows; make your own sock puppets or buy some (they are a good investment).

PLAYDOUGH

To contain playdough mess, try using a plastic tablecloth on the floor. It's easier for a preschooler to play on the floor than at the table. And, this method is a much faster clean up than wiping down a table and picking up all the little pieces off the floor!

BUILD A FORT

Build forts with boxes, blankets, laundry baskets, baby gates and anything else that will stand up. Put a quilt or blanket over the table, and your child can crawl under and play.*

BEAN BOX

Fill a small plastic bin (with a lid for easy storage) with pinto beans. Bury small toys and let him dig them out. Play this on the floor on top of a plastic table cloth or old sheet for easy clean up.*

LAUNDRY

Make an event out of doing laundry. Let him ride in or help push the laundry basket. He can also help load and unload. Encourage him to help pull all of the socks out of the laundry pile and make a separate pile. Or, find all of the green towels. While sorting and folding, try throwing different pieces on his head and playing peek-a-boo.

TISSUE BOXES

Tissue boxes are wonderful. Go around the house and put things in and then have him reach in and guess what it is before pulling it out. This also works well with teaching opposites—do you feel the big ball? Do you feel the small ball? Do you feel a car in the box? Can you pull it out? Where's the hole for your hand to go in? Is it up or down? You could work on shapes this way, too.*

ONLINE GAMES

Let him sit in your lap while you play some free online preschool computer games together.

BATHTUB

The bathtub is a lot of fun during the middle of the day.

- Give your child a can of shaving cream and watch him decorate the tub.
- Make some homemade tub paint (mix ½ cup dish soap, and 1 tablespoon cornstarch. Pour into ice cube trays, and add a few drops of food coloring to each section.)
- Let him eat a popsicle in the tub—great fun and no mess to clean up off the floor or clothes!
- Give him a big stack of plastic cups. Preschoolers never seem to get tired of filling and dumping.
- No matter the season, let your little one wear a bathing suit in the tub for a "swim."**

Outdoor Fun

ON THE DRIVEWAY

Sidewalk chalk and bubbles are always good to have on hand.

FIND THE COLORS

Take a trip to the paint section of a local store and let him pick out a variety of color swatch cards. Bring them home, punch a hole in the top of each, and put them together on a ring. Then go for a walk outside (or inside) and see if he can match the colors.*

TREASURE HUNT

Punch air holes in the tops of plastic containers for critters—grasshoppers, roly polies (pillbugs), crickets, praying mantis, geckos, caterpillars, etc. These containers can also be used for “treasure hunt” items such as bird feathers, acorns, pecans, seashells, pinecones, rocks, etc. Enjoy going to ponds or lakes and trying to catch fish by tossing bread pieces and then scooping the fish up with very inexpensive nets. Take along a bucket, put the fish in there, study them, hold them and throw them back in the water.*

GO ON A WALK

Go on a walk, hand in hand, with your preschooler and just see what catches his interest. Or, if you are needing exercise, put him in the stroller. If you are going to be gone for an extensive amount of time or are worried about him sleeping when you would prefer him not to, load him up with some books to look at and a snack. You can also have him look for the next fire hydrant, red stop sign, etc.

SAVE THE MILK JUGS

Milk jugs are great scoops or dump tools if you cut off the top but leave the handle. You can also use them to catch balls.* For summer fun, use it to try catching water balloons or “water bombs.” (These are baseball sized balls that are soft and soak up lots of water.) This may be beyond your child’s coordination level, but is some good wet fun even if he never makes a “basket.”

Games & Activities

GUESS WHAT IT IS?

Play a “Guess What It Is?” game in a dark room (closet or laundry room would work during the day). This can be

done with plastic animals, toys, trucks, people, or anything else he likes. Everyone playing gets one and has to try to guess what it is by the way it feels. Is it a firefighter? Does it feel like a lion? Is it a Lego? Is it a train? There’s something about being in the dark that is lots of fun!*

FUN WITH ICE

Preschoolers think it’s fun to freeze things. Put his favorite toy in a container, fill it with water, and freeze it. He can play with it outside or in the tub and see how long it takes for it to melt. You can also make icebergs by freezing water in a plastic container and dumping it in the tub so the play people can climb it or the ships can hit or chase it. Beware that it will melt quickly, but will be fun while it lasts.*

PAPER BAG CITY

Get a pack of small paper lunch bags. Draw pictures of windows, doors, a steeple, pets, bushes, etc. on the outside. Crumple up newspaper and fill them partway full. Fold the top over so that it forms a kind of triangle shaped roof and staple. Then line them up to make a city to play with people or vehicles.*

PILLOW POUNCE

Pillow pounce time! Let your preschooler take all of the pillows off the couch, bed or such and roll around on them as a special treat.*

HOT CHOCOLATE PARTY

What kid wouldn’t like a hot chocolate break in the middle of the day?! It is fun anytime, but a great way to turn around a day that is not going so well as everyone can sit and relax and talk. Make it even more special with fresh cookies. Or, make it a tea party, complete with milk and sugar cubes.*

MEDIEVAL TIMES PARTY

Have a medieval feast using plastic goblets (from a party store). Fill with clear grape juice or whatever you choose. Pretend your child is the king, knight, prince, dragon, queen, or princess who is joining you at the castle. Use medieval language (preschoolers love it!): “Lords and ladies, the king and I welcome you to the royal feast given in honor of the brave knight, _____, who has made friends with the dragon and brought him into the city for everyone to pet.” Then you can toast with the goblets, feast on finger foods, and continue the regal sounding language.*

I SPY

Make toilet paper roll binoculars, then go for a walk and “I spy” things (or look out the window on a rainy day).*

DRESS UP

Dress up clothes are wonderful and don’t have to be elaborate. Old t-shirts of yours with a belt, hat, gloves, and accessories you already have—scarves, shoes, big jackets, hats, men’s ties, old jewelry, purses and such will work if you don’t want to spend a ton of money on formal costumes. If you do buy, check garage sales or go after Halloween and get a few treats that are on sale.*

EASTER EGG HUNT

Easter egg hunts are fun all year round. Hide toys, stickers, or snacks in them and use it as an opportunity to talk about Jesus and the empty tomb all year long.* Each time the child finds an egg, you could encourage him to joyfully shout, “Jesus is alive!

MAKE A VIDEO

If you have a phone or camera that can make videos, make a movie and then play it back so your child can watch.*

Crafts

MAKE MUSIC TOGETHER

Music makers are easy and fun to make. Use empty paper towels holders or yogurt cups and fill up with rice, beans, or pasta. Tape off the ends and let him decorate the shaker with markers, crayons, or stickers. Stringing old keys together makes a lovely chime. Empty oatmeal boxes make great drums.*

MARSHMALLOW SCULPTURES

Use mini marshmallows and toothpicks to make interesting sculptures.*

STOCK UP

Stock up on paint-with-water books, watercolor paints, finger paints/paper, and Dot-A-Dot paints (found online, at craft stores, or educational stores). These are wonderful to have on hand as an instant activity any time your little one is getting restless.

COFFEE FILTERS

Coffee filters can make neat crafts. Your preschooler can color on them with markers, then add a little water and let the colors run and mix together.*

GLUE STICKS

Kids love using glue sticks to glue anything. Give your preschooler scraps of paper (colored construction paper, old gift wrap, newspaper, colored tissue paper, etc.) and let him have at it on paper, tissue boxes, paper plates, paper bags, etc.

PAINTING

Don’t be afraid of paint. Keep an old sheet or plastic tablecloth to cover the table, and an old t-shirt to cover the child. Paint on paper plates, paper bags, regular paper, etc. For something more substantial, keep an eye out for small wooden figures at the dollar store or Walmart that can be painted.* He could even go on a hunt for a pet rock, paint it, and glue on googly eyes after the paint has dried.

PAPER PLATE MASKS

Paper plates are another thing that work wonders. Flip them over and draw on them, making a lion mask or elephant. Cut out eyeholes and there you go. It doesn’t matter what your artwork looks like, your child will love to play with them and make his own. You can draw the outline and he can color/scribble.*

Outings

VISIT DADDY

If your husband works close, take a break and go see him. Bake some goodies to take to his office or take him a cup of his favorite coffee. If he can take off for lunch and the weather is nice, pack a picnic for a nearby park.*

CONSTRUCTION ZONE!

Pack a snack or picnic and drive to a site nearby where some sort of construction is happening, preferably with large machinery! Park at a safe distance and watch the big machines and workers while munching.

MOM NEEDS A TREAT, TOO

On cold, wet, or sick days, load up your child and go to Sonic, Starbucks, or similar drive-through. Pick out a treat for yourself and get your little one a small ice water (dump half of it out to minimize mess) and let him go to town with it. Your preschooler might end up soaking wet but who cares? Sit in the car in a parking spot and enjoy your drinks. Take a magazine for yourself or books to read to your child. This is a life-saver if you fear you are going stir-crazy in the house!

LIBRARY TIME

Go to the library and stock up on a bunch of books. Keep them in a special box at home (to keep them from getting mixed up with your own books) and enjoy quiet reading time . . . a blessed break from chasing around a small child!

Fun with Food

HELP MOM COOK

This is a great age to let your child stand on a chair by you while you are doing some cooking. Make treats to take to the fire station, let him help with a dinner preparation, etc..

MAKE SMOOTHIES

On hot days, make a big production out of making fruit smoothies for an afternoon snack. Let your child help dump the ingredients in the blender, push the button, and watch the noisy machine do its job making your healthy snack! Since smoothies are too thick to go through sippy cups, your little one will find it a treat to use a real cup and straw. To minimize clean up, consider sitting on the floor and stripping the child to his diaper.

EGG CARTONS SNACKS

Preschoolers love egg cartons, and it is fun to make lunch or a snack and put it in there. This can include dried or fresh fruit, mini Canadian bacon, cubed cheese, crackers, nuts, etc. It doesn't have to fill up the whole thing—just a few things in each compartment.*

WHIPPED CREAM

A can of whipped cream can add a fun touch to the day. Enjoy it on fresh fruit or a hot chocolate. If you want to be wild and crazy, spray some directly into your child's mouth!* If you have a surface that won't be ruined by this, spray some whipped cream and use it as finger paint. Let your child doodle or help them use one finger to draw simple things like a smiley face, the first letter of his name, etc.

Notes

Horizontal lines for writing notes, with a decorative floral illustration in the background.