

The Boredom Jar

96 screen-free activities, sorted by age

“I’m bored” gets said in our house roughly as often as “what’s for dinner,” and this jar is the thing that finally gave it somewhere to go.

Cut out the cards on the following pages, fold them in half, and drop them into any jar, tin or box you have lying around. Next time you hear the words, hand it over and let them pick.

How to make one that lasts

- Cut anything that needs you — independent-play ideas get picked; project ideas gather dust.
- Let the kids help write extra ones on the blank cards at the end.
- Keep a few boring ones in there — they’re the ones that get picked most.
- Don’t aim for silence. A boredom jar isn’t a babysitter.

The Boredom Jar

Cut along the dashed lines, fold, and drop into a jar. From discovermorrow.com

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Sticker a page, any page

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Water painting in the garden (a pot of water, a paintbrush, nothing to clean up)

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Sort the laundry basket by colour

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Build a tower and knock it down, ten times

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Pots and pans drum kit (sorry!)

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Fill and empty containers in the bath or sink

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Hide soft toys around one room, then find them

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Match socks from the laundry pile

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Post shapes or coins through a cut slot in a box

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Blow bubbles in the garden

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Draw around their own hand and colour it in

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Copy animal noises and guess which one

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TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Stack cushions into a mountain and climb over it

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Thread big pasta shapes onto string

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Play peekaboo with a blanket

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Squash playdough flat with their hands

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Freeze small toys in ice cubes and rescue them

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Roll a ball back and forth across the floor

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Sing the five nursery rhymes you now know by heart

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Empty a cupboard of plastic tubs and restack them

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Splash in a shallow tray of water with a cup and spoon

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Tear up old magazines into pieces

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Wear a grown-up's shoes and go to work

TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS

2–4 years

Chalk scribbles on the patio, hosed off after

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SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Cushion and sofa obstacle course, timed with a stopwatch	SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Set up a shop with real coins and price labels	SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Spy mission: a notebook and a list of things to “investigate” around the house
SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Make a paper aeroplane and test which design flies furthest	SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Write and illustrate a comic strip, three panels only	SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Set up dominoes and knock them down
SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Learn one card trick and practise it on someone	SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Den building — one sheet, ten minutes, go	SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Build the tallest tower out of books, then measure it
SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Write a letter to their future self, aged 18	SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Learn to juggle with rolled-up socks	SCHOOL AGE <i>5–8 years</i> Set up a garden obstacle course with things you already own

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SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Draw a treasure map and hide something for someone else to find

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Make up a new board game with rules they write themselves

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Learn five words in a language nobody in the house speaks

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Copy out a favourite joke book to practise handwriting

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Build a marble run out of cardboard tubes

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Play shop with a proper till roll of receipts

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Write a weather forecast and read it out like a presenter

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Origami — just one shape, from a book or memory

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Set up a museum of their toys, with labels

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Practise skipping and count how high they can get

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Pack a survival kit for the next den

SCHOOL AGE
5–8 years
Try to build a house of cards, five storeys

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TWEENS

9–12 years

Write a secret code and pass notes in it

TWEENS

9–12 years

Plan a pretend holiday: destination, budget, itinerary, on paper

TWEENS

9–12 years

Learn a magic trick from a book (not a video) and perform it

TWEENS

9–12 years

Redesign their bedroom on paper before moving a single thing

TWEENS

9–12 years

Start a scrapbook or memory box

TWEENS

9–12 years

Teach a younger sibling a card game

TWEENS

9–12 years

Write a stand-up routine and perform it at dinner

TWEENS

9–12 years

Learn to solve one layer of a Rubik's cube

TWEENS

9–12 years

Write a short story with a twist ending

TWEENS

9–12 years

Plan and budget a three-course meal, then help cook it

TWEENS

9–12 years

Learn a number trick and show it off

TWEENS

9–12 years

Design the box and instructions for a board game they've invented

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TWEENS

9–12 years

Write a letter of complaint to a made-up company, for fun

TWEENS

9–12 years

Practise a card shuffle until it looks smooth

TWEENS

9–12 years

Build a family tree going back as far as they can ask about

TWEENS

9–12 years

Learn to tie five different knots

TWEENS

9–12 years

Write and record a radio advert for something silly

TWEENS

9–12 years

Race the clock to build the tallest paper tower

TWEENS

9–12 years

Plan a treasure hunt for younger siblings, with clues

TWEENS

9–12 years

Practise mental maths against a timer

TWEENS

9–12 years

Learn a new card game from a book and teach it back

TWEENS

9–12 years

Write a review of the last book or film they actually liked

TWEENS

9–12 years

Design a set of house rules for their favourite game and playtest it

TWEENS

9–12 years

Draw a map of the neighbourhood from memory, then check it

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WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Cook something nobody in the house has eaten before

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Board games, obviously

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

A family quiz, written by the kids, marked by the adults

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Clear out one drawer and sell or donate what's inside

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Indoor picnic on the floor, even if it's just toast

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Family talent show, five minutes each

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Build blanket forts and eat dinner in them

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

A doorstep photo scavenger hunt around the block

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Bake something that needs no fancy equipment

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Family arm-wrestling or thumb-war tournament

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Write postcards to family who don't live nearby

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Rearrange one room's furniture together

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WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

A cook-off where each person makes one course

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Watch old home videos or photos and tell the stories again

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Learn a card game none of you have played before

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

A garden or park litter-pick, turned into a mini competition

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Charades, but everyone writes the clues

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Make a family playlist, one song each

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

A family jigsaw, left out to finish over a few days

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Plan next year's summer holiday on paper, just for fun

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

A no-talking dinner, everyone communicates by notes

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Draw each other's portraits, badly, on purpose

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

A living-room bowling alley with plastic cups and a ball

WHOLE FAMILY

rainy Saturdays

Write thank-you notes to someone who deserves one

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