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# 31

## **Alternatives to TV and Video Games For Your Elementary School Child**

**One of a series of Parent Guides from**



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## What to Do Instead

It does take time and a little planning to fill the time that your children are used to spending in front of the TV or the computer screen. But here are some fun activities you can try:

### Inside Fun

**1** Play board games or card games together. (Go Fish®, Uno®, Checkers®, Scrabble®, Chess). Teach your child how to play solitaire (*not* on the computer). A card game of War can occupy children for an eternity.

**2** Keep some play dough on hand. You can make your own with the recipe on this page. Store in the refrigerator in an airtight container and bring it out on a rainy day or at a time when your child wants to play alone.

**3** Create an Idea Box. Help your child decorate a small tissue box. Brainstorm about ideas your child can do when she's bored. These should be things she can do by herself, with no help from you. Write them on small slips of colored paper and put them in the box. Then when your child is bored, or when you need a few minutes to finish a task, you can get out the Idea Box and have your child draw a slip. Here are some ideas to get you started: read a book, work on a puzzle, start writing a story, invent a secret code, write a sentence backwards (without looking in a mirror).

**4** Give your child a magnet. Let her see where it will—and won't—stick. She'll learn that only iron and steel are attracted to magnets. But a magnetic force will pass through a piece of paper, glass, cloth, or pottery. See if your child can figure out how to make her own magnet by rubbing a piece of metal against the end of a permanent magnet twenty times, and always in the same direction.

#### NO-COOK PLAY DOUGH

2 cups self rising flour  
2 tablespoons alum  
2 tablespoons salt  
2 tablespoons cooking oil  
1 cup, plus 2 tablespoons  
boiling water  
Mix and knead.

**5** Help your child create an indoor garden. Save small plastic containers. Let your child fill them with potting soil and plant herb seeds in them to make a window herb garden.

**6** Phone Bag Fun. There comes a time when every parent has to take a phone call. That is usually the same moment that your child insists on talking to you (or starting a fight with his brother). One way to amuse your child while you're on the phone is to assemble a small box with activities your child can do alone. Here's a list to get you started:

- Crayons and a coloring book.
- A deck of cards.
- A yo-yo.
- Easy puzzles your child can do alone.
- Activities you have cut out from newspapers or downloaded from the Internet—word search, mazes, connect the dots.

**7** Give your child a magnifying glass and let him see the world close up.

**8** Design a new board game together. Draw a path of squares from "Start" to "Finish" on a poster board. Fill in some spaces with fun things to do—"draw a picture," "sing a song." Add some other silly things in other spaces—"make a funny face," "hop on one foot," or "wiggle your nose." Have your child create rules for the game. Roll the dice and have fun.

**9** See who can fill in the most words in a crossword puzzle—or in the least amount of time.

**10** Take turns hiding different items and challenging the other person to find them. Give the "finder" clues to let her know what to look for and where to start looking.

**11** Have your child decorate and fill a "time capsule" box using pictures and objects that represent his life and interests this year. He might include a family picture, a drawing of a pet, or the name of a favorite book. Ask him how he wants to remember this year. Have him write a short essay about what is happening in the world. Now put the capsule away for safe-keeping. In several years, it will be fun to look at it to remember the significance of the objects

## Other Parent Guides Available From The Parent Institute®

Educators,

Like the other 24 titles, this Parent Guide is a concise summary of the latest and best information on this topic as you help parents help their children to succeed in school and life. The topics were chosen based on the most frequently requested learning topics from educators and parents. Formatted for the busy parent in mind, they are full of no-nonsense, easy-to-implement, practical ideas that have been proven to work. The complete list of titles is below:

10 Great Ways to Teach Children Responsibility  
25 Ways You Can Put the Power of Routines to Work for You and Your Child  
52 Great Ways Families Can Spend Time Together  
Developmental Milestones for Preschool Children—Is My Child on Track?  
Preparing Your Child for Reading Success—Birth to Age Five  
How to Choose the Best Preschool or Day Care for Your Child  
Common Discipline Problems of Preschoolers and How to Solve Them  
37 Experiences Every Child Should Have Before Starting School  
Getting Your Child Ready for Kindergarten  
The Road to Reading Success—Elementary School Years  
Common Discipline Problems of Elementary Schoolers and How to Solve Them  
31 Alternatives to TV and Video Games for Your Elementary School Child  
Give Your Child the Edge: 10 Teachers' Learning Secrets Parents Can Use  
How to Help Children Do Their Best on Tests  
Helping Children Get Organized for Homework and Schoolwork  
Help Your Child Develop Good Learning Styles  
How to Instill the Character Traits of Success in Your Child  
Seven Proven Ways to Motivate Children to Do Better in School  
Help Your Child Deal With Bullies and Bullying  
Help Your Child Deal With Peer Pressure  
How to Help Your Struggling Student  
Common Discipline Problems of Teenagers and How to Solve Them  
What to Do If Your Child Has ADD/ADHD  
Common Discipline Problems of Middle School Children and How to Solve Them  
Making a Smooth Transition to Middle School

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