

HomeschoolFreebieOfTheDay.com presents



Our Favorite
Frugal
Family
FUN
Activities
Volume One: At Home!

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FAMILY FUN Activities**
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Entertaining the family doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg. (You can save those to buy gasoline.) There are all sorts of creative ways for the family to have fun, be together, and spend little if any money. All it takes is a little resourcefulness, creativity, an open mind and a young heart. After all, nothing's better than laughing with your family, and laughs are free.

Here in Volume One we have a great collection of "real life" ideas for fun, frugal activities for the family – when you want to have a fun evening or afternoon AT HOME. (These suggestions were all contributed by our readers at HomeschoolFreebieOfTheDay.com. Thank you all for your input!) Take an idea and run with it, adding your own tweaks and twists to create some memorable family times together. Enjoy!

– *The Erskine Family*

I think the digital camera scavenger hunts are fun. You get a list of things to find, take your digital cameras in hand, and go take pics. In the case of a tie, best pic wins.

One of the funnest things we did this summer was save cereal boxes and we enlisted the help of our friends. We saved all food boxes and larger boxes too. Then we had a playdate and built a huge cereal box house in the playroom with all our friends!

Scrapbooking is a favorite of ours. What we do is recycle graphics and word art from magazines, greeting cards, junk mail, etc. We also use free scrapbooking printables and clip art. Each of my children use this process to make their own homeschool yearbooks. It's a great way for the kids to store school items that are special to them, but not necessary for portfolio's. And the only cost I have is copies of digital photos, printer paper, and sheet protectors. We use old binder dividers for colored cardstock :)

Bonfire in the backyard! We always feel like we're camping and love to roast marshmallows...but when you're done you get to sleep in your own bed! This works even in the BBQ w/ the warm coals.

At night we play firefly tag...everyone has a flashlight and all except the person who is 'it' hide. Those who are hiding must hold the flashlight in front of their chin and count to 10 (one, Mississippi, two, Mississippi, etc.) and turn on their flashlight only for the count of 10. Each needs to run to a home base, whoever is caught first is 'it'. The person who is 'it' also has a flashlight that can be used to seek out the rest of the players.

We like to use all the pillows, chairs, blankets, etc to make a giant fort out of our living room. The kids can play in there for hours and it's even fun for them to "invite" mom and dad to "their house" for lunch :)

I like to shop the thrift stores for board games. I have found some really unique older games that just aren't made anymore. We like to play together in the evenings.

We like to play lawn bowling. You put out a target ball and everyone gets four balls to throw- the object is to be the person who gets one of their balls closest to the target ball.

Every Friday is pizza/movie night. We rent movies from Christiancinema.com on the one movie out-at-a-time rate of \$7.99/month. At this rate, we receive 1 movie per week, which helps to support our standards of limited movie entertainment.

Playing a game called "Who, what, when, where, why. We learned it on ZOOM. Each person has paper and pencil. Everyone writes "who" then they write who their who is. (person, alien, dinosaur etc.) without letting anyone see their answer. Then everyone folds over their answer and passes it to the person beside them. Now, everyone writes "What" and then writes their "what" (example: prepares food for a picnic). Remember not to show anyone then fold over their answer and pass to the next person. Continue this with "When", "where" and "Why". Then when everyone has finished their "Why" answer, each person unfolds the paper that they have last and take turns reading the story that has been created on their page. Hilarious!

We do what we call fort night. We take old sheets and make a fort out of them in the living room. We make sure the tv is inside the fort. We get free movies from the library, pop our own popcorn, bring our sleeping bags inside the fort, and watch a movie together. Then after the movies are over, we sleep in the fort.

Treasure hunts are a favorite. The older kids help put them together. We use math puzzles, picture clues for the younger, rhymes, riddles, writing in white crayon as a 'secret code' - you have to color with a marker to see the written clue. There is usually a 'treasure box' at the end with a treat for each child in it. If you have a couple older kids, they'll love making a bunch of treasure hunts. I've had my kids do four or five hunts and stay busy and happy for hours.

We like to turn cooking dinner into our own cooking show. My husband often video tapes us and my son learns a lot about cooking while he learns to express himself (public speaking practice) as he explains the steps of the recipe.

Everyone gets a paper (or 2 or 3) and pen and starts writing fun things down for someone else, not knowing WHO will get this paper. You get ten minutes (or 15 or 20) to write and prepare. After that we all get a paper from someone else with something nice on it like 'look in the fridge, I made you something nice' or 'I will change your sheets right now' or 'i will make your hair beautiful today' (always funny when dad gets this card instead of one of the girls). A fun and nice family time!

We love to snuggle up together on the sofa and read character building books (Lamplighter books, Elsie Dinsmore Series, Pilgrim's Progress, Tiger & Tom, King's Daughter, Choice Stories for Children, etc.)

My kids love to campout in the backyard. Once we let them watch a movie by projecting it onto the side of the house. They ate popcorn and watched the movie snuggled in their sleeping bags and blankies.

Inviting friends over to visit. We love entertaining families of friends. The preparations, like making special dishes, tidying and preparing activities, can be almost as much fun as the time with the guests as we enjoy creative time together.

We have Friday Family Fun Night. Sometimes we pull out all the Thomas Trains or Fisher Price Doll House and set up everything in the living room. Everyone plays. Daddy, Mommy, older kids and younger. We also get Daddy's old giant architecture paper, tape it to the floor, and have drawing contests.

DANCE! We love to turn the music up and just dance or play freeze dance! Cost:\$0

We absolutely love making videos on our camera and then play them on the TV. We use the Wii, which is extra fun, to play them backwards too. We laugh sooo hard!

We play 20 questions. The topic can be anything from Bible, to geography, to math, to current events, to history...etc. (you get the idea). One person is "it." The person who is it goes first by thinking of a person, place, or thing related to the topic. For example, "I'm thinking of someone from the Bible" would be a good start. The people playing take turns going around the room asking one question for each turn. Questions should help discover the answer. Questions must be phrased as Yes or No questions. When you think you know the answer, you must wait your turn to guess, phrasing your guess as a yes or no question. Such as "Is the person you are thinking of from the Bible, Moses?" Turn taking continues until someone correctly guesses. Then the one who guessed correctly, gets to take his or her turn being "it". Find some family videos or educational videos on the web and watch them together. Learn a new craft from YouTube, a website, or the library and do your craft at home. Origami can be done for free using junk mail paper and free folding resources.

We like to search for interesting rocks. When we bring them home we paint them all sorts of pretty colors and patterns. My kids could paint rocks all day long.

Making movies. Our oldest son is interested in film making and all the children have had a ton of fun making movies and editing them. The most fun they had was when they filmed a chase scene at a park and had everyone there wondering what they were doing. We are also a game family so we enjoy a variety of board games. We also watch old tv show online and movies online so we don't have to pay theater prices. We also love hospitality so having people to our home for tea parties or just a simple snack and fellowship is a lot of fun for us. We put on a game night at our home and invited our church (we are in a small church). It became a favorite time of the month for many in our church. So we had fun and ministered to others as well.

Play Squiggle... it's an actual game, but all you have to do is draw the same squiggle line on everyone's piece of paper and everyone gets 60 seconds to turn it into something recognizable. Everyone usually draws something unique.

We love playing dodge ball in our backyard. We get the softest balls and divide the team. By doing this, the neighborhood kids have begun to draw to our backyard each time they hear us. When they don't want to play dodge ball we set up the soccer nets or corn hole.

For a day that has been particularly stressful, we really enjoy having a good old fashioned pillowfight! It doesn't take much time, and even the littlest kiddos try to flop a pillow at Daddy!

Any of the 101 things that a cardboard box can become. Right now, my kids have a 2 story cardboard box condo with windows, doors mailboxes, a garden, and you name it! They know they can keep the boxes until they are worn out. Give them some boxes (watch Craigslist for freebies) of any size and just watch what they become!

We like to take turns having one of the kids pick the recipe and help make it. Another thing we do is to look up some recipes from around the world and do an international meal and talk about that country once a month.

Ice cream sundae parties. I like to purchase ice cream on sale at our local Kroger, grab a few toppings and, voilà, instant party.

When we do holiday activities, we have an old family tradition that goes back to at least my great-grandparents. We set up a coffee table and put together a jigsaw puzzle. Sometimes we'll do a family game night during the rest of the year. We have great evenings together this way.

We have 5 children, the oldest is 7 and the game they all love to play is hide and seek and reverse hide and seek. Hide and seek: traditional where everyone hides and 1 person seeks. Or Reverse Hide and Seek where one person hides and then everyone goes and finds them and hides with them until everyone is together. Example: 1 person hides in closet then 5 others have to find the person, so one by one then find and hide with until the closet is full of 5 people hiding together--usually followed by lots of giggling! They also like to play "Don't Eat ____" We make 9 squares on a paper, 3 down and 3 across and fill it with pictures of their favorite things. Then put a candy, raisin, marshmallow on each square, one person leaves and the others pick a square. Then the person comes back and starts eating the treat on each square, until they get to the square previously picked and everyone yells out, "Don't Eat ____" We have done Optimus Prime, Remy, even farm animals. The kids are all quiet until we all yell out "Don't Eat..." and everyone laughs.

We have a big back yard in which to collect bugs, caterpillars, tadpoles etc we make habitats and watch them. We have made teepees with pine boughs and igloos in the winter. Right now we have been experimenting with sticks and feather for arrows (studying Native Americans) but you can also use straws and paper. Just make a small slit in the straw end and insert the paper. How does it go without/with paper? One piece, more? distance & accuracy

My children LOVE treasure hunts. I will hide something and then give them clue #1, they decode the clue and find another clue waiting for them. Some times it is as simple as having a special lunch waiting for them. Other times there might be a special book each child has been waiting for. The "treasure" is only a fraction of the fun....the HUNT is the other part! I have been know to ask the neighbors if I can hide clues on their property and it keeps things interesting for my older children!

A game called Hoops. It's history is from the 1800s I believe. WE made our own with embroidery hoops. Take the bigger piece and wrap ribbon around it then about a 1 1/2 dowel cut in half you go outside or in the living room at your own risk and you have to catch the hoop on both dowels up to 10 points. IT is fun you can look it up on the internet for more details.

All our kids ever want is our undivided attention. So whether it's playing board games or playing ball outside it doesn't really matter!

We make up stories together. When Mom and Dad start, it's usually because one of us hears something that sounds like an absurdity or said something a little "Off" or backward. So we begin a tall tale building on that mispoken or misheard thing. What If there were such a place or thing? Now that our preschooler is beginning to tell stories of her own, we encourage her to expand. When we begin without her with our own stories, we encourage her to join in with verbs, names, acting out the story, etc.

We take turns giving "news" reports....the older kids and parents are the reporters and the youngest (age 4) has the command. The 4-year old sits on a bar stool with his "microphone" and introduces each reporter. The kids report on something they have learned, 3-4 interesting facts. Mom reports on anything recently studied with the kids....or something new with dramatic flare. Dad reports about something in the news / world because he's been listening to conservative talk radio all day and has great thoughts to share.

We enjoy a game we call "family story". One person gives a title, then starts telling a story. After 2-3 sentences, they stop (usually in the middle of a sentence) and the next person takes over where they left off. We continue until each person has had a turn, and the last person gets to tell the ending. This has been especially fun with younger children, as they come up with some of the wackiest and funniest parts of the story.

We like to tie-dye. You can get a couple packages of RIT dye for fairly cheap. Sometimes we buy inexpensive t-shirts from the store, but other times we tie-dye shirts that we already have. If a favorite shirt gets a small stain, we don't toss it, we dye it. Covers up the stain, and we have fun together doing it.

A fun and (mostly) free way to experience science is to gather as many 1 or 2 liter bottles as you can find and google "liter bottle + experiment" and you'll be making stuff like cloud formations, mentos explosions, dancing raisins, liquid fireworks and many more!

We love having a picnic at home ... prepare our favorite finger foods, spread out a blanket to sit on, and enjoy a picnic without the bugs! I find it's not really about the picnicky foods, but the fact that "mom and dad are sitting on the floor with us" that the kids enjoy. We move around the house, too ... sometimes we sit in the living room around the coffee table and play a card or board game, sometimes

in front of the TV where we pop in a family-friendly movie.

Building camp sites with rope, sheets etc or even branches & fronds etc. We help build huts for each other until we have a little village, we use found objects as currency, trade goods & services & at the end of the day build a camp fire & have dinner around it. If weather allows we will sleep outside also, pure magic !

We like to cook together. Buy flat bread or hoagie buns 2 cut in half, pizza sauce, shredded mozz cheese, pepperoni, veggies of choice, and let the kids assemble their own pizzas and bake. You can make cookies, banana spits, or fruit salad together for dessert. Cooking together is SO much fun for the kids. Now, getting them to help with the clean up is another matter! lol

We make our own "constellations" by drawing a design on black construction paper w/ a white crayon, then poking holes every so often on the lines. When you're done, turn off the lights and hold a flashlight under the construction paper, and your constellation will show up on the ceiling. If you make something specific (like an animal) the other people can try to guess what your constellation is.

Making paper airplanes and trying to make loops, or seeing which one goes the farthest is fun and doesn't usually break too many things.

When the kids were younger, doing skits, some made up, some Bible stories. They would set up a "theater" in the living room with seats for the audience, props, and candles or lamps for appropriate lighting.

Stargazing - we sometimes use our son's small telescope but mostly just the naked eye. We mostly do this at special times - when Jupiter is particularly bright or something else of interest to see/look for. We fairly frequently can see a shooting star and sometimes the International Space Station flying by overhead. It's refreshing to look up into the night sky. It provides a sense of calm and peacefulness and helps us to appreciate and refocus on our Awesome Creator God the Father.

We sometimes have our own talent show. Everyone has to show off one talent no matter how silly.

We use the hallway as a volleyball court. We tape bluetaek to newspaper so it looks like a net (lightweight) and bounce balloons over it. The taller people kneel so that the smaller people can compete. Mix in both teams, adults and children.

We do target shooting with BB guns.

We have had a lot of fun making a "restaurant" at home. The kids create a menu, and make it on a folded card. They make a sign with the name of our restaurant and set the table, etc. They create the atmosphere with music playing, lights down low, candles, etc. The parents and older kids make the food / cook the meal. Everyone gets dressed up as if we are "going out" for dinner, and then we enjoy! We take turns being the hostess, waiter, etc. Don't forget to leave a tip!

My children love to play hide-and-seek in the dark with their Dad. The lights go out, and Dad hides, and the children all seek. The children hide, and Dad seeks. My family plays iwth 'roaming' rules - ie you do not have to stay put in one place, you can move from room to room to elude being found!

Drawing on the sidewalk with sidewalk chalk. Give a theme; and let everyone give their interpretation. Give a prize, or several prizes, for some aspect of the theme interpretation. Record the event in photos/ words in scrapbook. Repeat it the next year, and next. Re-live fun experiences. Let passerby's stop and join in the fun if desired, or let them quickly judge "winners". Drink lots of lemonade while drawing.... Best done the day before a big rainstorm, which will "erase" the chalk and "clean the mess" without any effort on your part. Or, let the kids clean it with a hose. (That may be as much fun as drawing it was...)

We have a game night, and sometimes invite other families to join us. When you have a lot of people, a fun game to play is "The Red Cup Game". Everyone sits around the table, and has a red plastic cup, and some scrap paper. Everyone comes up with their own question of, "Who in this group is most likely to..." After the questions is written and is hanging off the top of the cup, the cups are placed int the center. Mix the cups up some, and then everyone takes a cup and answers the question on different piece of scrap paper and put it inside the cup and passes it to the next person, and so on and so on, until

you get to your first question again. Then the responses are read. Sometimes it starts out slow, but once you get the hang of it the questions get better and the responses get funnier. We have made some good friends with this game (but be careful it could go the other way also)

We enjoy playing a lot of games, including Rummikub, SkipBo, Scrabble, Where in the World?, Boggle, and more. We also periodically do something we call "What I like about..." Each person in the family takes turns saying something they like about each of the other family members until every person has said something nice about every other person. We've created board games together on the computer and then brought it to Kinko's, blew it up and laminated it. We love playing games we've created together. We also love to do "Beanie Baby Toss" using kitchen bowls and tossing our Beanie Babies into them. Drawing and coloring together is always a hit. I like to draw gardens for my kids. I draw lots of stems with leaves on them and leave it to them to create the flowers. Then we put it up in our schoolroom. My kids are 5 and 7.

Our favourite thing to do together is BOARD GAMES. We have fun, laugh together. It teaches the kids how to prefer one another, when they allow a sibling to choose a game that they may not want to play.

We play a lot of board games. For birthdays and Christmas we often get even more...we have an entire closet full of games! We have purchased them from resale shops, Ebay, and friends whose children have outgrown games. We are enjoying the fact that because our children are both reading they can play most any games now.

Create own gameboard games with question cards and tricks. And after to play it all together. It is fun and possible to take care of everybody's skills into account.

Here's a list of "favorite games" that came up time and again in the responses we received. Maybe you can find a new family favorite in this list! Check thrift shops, yard sales, etc. and you'll uncover some of these – super cheap!

Apples to Apples
Rummy
Four Player Checkers
Kings in the Corner

Card games from MindJolt
Dutch Blitz
Aggravation
Life
Payday
Clue
Monopoly
Uno
Quirkle
Rack-O
Yahtzee
BLINK
War
Chess
Checkers
Backgammon
Risk
train dominoes
Settlers of Catan
Rummikub

and finally, a couple of GAME PLAYING TIPS

* We have a lot of games so sometimes we will pull 3 off of the shelf. If more than half of us groan at the site of the game, everyone helps to verify that all parts are there then it is rubber banded and put in the give-away pile. If there are no real groans or only a few, we play the game. If it is not really being enjoyed we stop and do the same thing with it as the other. This has helped us to clean off many shelves over the past year. And it is a fun way to figure out if we want something besides making the whole family help out. Usually we end up with a great fun game.

* One way we take the 'sting' out of losing is that the winner puts the game away, and if you didn't win, you get to pick the next game we play!

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