

# Fun & Free Activities For



## Families On A Budget

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<http://www.thecleanairpeople.com>



Everyone loves to have a little fun now and again. Especially kids! And, of course those that are still kids at heart. But, with the rising economy, it becomes more and more difficult to have money on hand for fantastic family outings.

The hope of this e-Book is to help you find several ways to spend the least amount of money while still having a heap of fun with your family while creating lasting memories.

You may already know, or have heard, that spending time with the ones you love costs you nothing. And that's true. However, without some activity to help pass that time, you may just be stuck spending time in the living room glued to the "boob tube". Not very fun. Although, at certain times, going outdoors isn't always possible.

Throughout this e-Book, you will find inventive and interesting ways to enjoy the time you spend with your family both indoors and outdoors without needing to have lots of money. Or ANY money for that matter! Which is always a great deal!

And, the most memorable activities will be those that money played no part in for you and the rest of your family. If you don't believe that, think back of one of the most terrific times you had when you were a kid. Anything about money in that memory? No? Thought so ;-)

There are plenty of activities for you below. Select a few, or invent a few of your own from the ideas you get from reading through the activities in this e-Book. Who knows? You may just begin a family tradition of fun!

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# FREE ACTIVITIES TO ENJOY WITH YOUR FAMILY

## Blowing Bubbles

Making your own bubbles couldn't be easier! You can use liquid hand soap and a bit of water to do this. All you would need is a bubble wand, which you could create out of a bit of thin wire (left over Easter Egg wire dippers would be excellent for this), and a container for the bubbles (you could simply use a bowl or plastic container for that) and you're all set.

For smaller children, try picking up some "tear free" shampoo to create your bubble mixture with. Do remember that the more "foamy" a liquid soap is, the lower quality your bubble mixture will be. Now, to create your own bubbles, simply take 1/15 cup of liquid soap (actually it is said that dish washing liquid works best) mixed with 1 cup of water inside whatever container you want to store it in.

Bubble mixtures of liquid soap and water can also be mixed with glycerin, sugar, or corn syrup as well. For even more bubble recipes, check out these websites:

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/bubbles1.html>,

<http://bubbleblowers.com/homemade.html>.

## Board Games

Almost every family home has one form of board game or another. Whether it be your standard board game such as Monopoly, Sorry, Trouble, etc., or a DVD type trivia game, these can provide hours of fun.

While DVD style games are fun, the classic board games are better as you will never have the same outcome. Meaning, even though you are playing the exact same game, the winner is unknown until you have finished the game.

Try spicing up the game by playing for different types of prizes, but be sure that everyone will win something. The prizes could be dividing up chores that are to be done, having the 1st place winner getting the easiest household chore and the last place winner receiving the more difficult, or the chore that is least preferred by all family members.

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You could also try having the prizes consist of allowing the 1st place winner pick tomorrow's activity, 2nd place winner picking the following day's activity, and so on.

If you don't have a board game lying around, why not invent your own games? Activities such as "treasure hunts" can be fun and educational at the same time. You can create your own maps or clue lists and let the first place winner(s) have first pick at the treasures. And, of course, the treasures can be anything you can think of that would have significant value within your particular family unit.

Also, a good game of hide and seek can also be hours of fun for all ages. And, hide and seek can be played both indoors or outdoors depending on the weather.

## Coloring

Always a great way to pass time on a rainy day, coloring pictures is a fantastic way to have some fun while developing artistic skills. Not only that, but you can turn an otherwise boring day of coloring into an "in-house" art contest. But, be sure that you have prizes for everyone so that each time everyone is a winner ;-)

If you don't have any coloring books, you can always print out pictures from websites like: <http://www.free-coloring-pages.com/>, <http://coloringbookfun.com/>, and <http://www.kidprintables.com/>. Don't forget to check out all the other free information within those websites for other terrific family oriented ideas, tips, and more.

Now, if you don't have any new crayons for coloring, the best time to pick some up is right before the new school year begins. You can get a box of 24 count crayons for 20 cents or less. So, if you need to stock up, this is the best time to do so.

Coloring doesn't have to be limited just to crayons and coloring books. You can do some finger painting, watercolor painting, or creating clay sculptures too.

## Play Card Games

Almost every "dollar store" sells decks of cards for a buck. And, almost everyone knows how to play card games. Whether it's "Go Fish", "Old Maid", Gin Rummy, or 5 Card Draw Poker. Obviously, you wouldn't want to teach your child how to become a poker virtuoso, but playing a card game such as "War" or "Go Fish" can help develop your child's math skills.

Now, you don't have to have a special deck of cards for games like Go Fish, Old Maid, or War. Any standard deck will do. So, when the kids are awake, you can play those card games that are child oriented, and when they go to bed, you and your friend, or significant other can play a more adult oriented game such as poker or Rummy.

Always have some sort of "prize" on hand if you plan on having a family Go Fish tournament. And be sure that everyone is a winner with the prizes going down in value or size. This is especially important for younger children so that no one ever feels as if they are a "loser". And, no one likes to feel that way, even older children. Although they might never admit it ;-)

## Working On Puzzles

If you need a bit of quiet time, then working on a 5,000 piece jigsaw puzzle may just be what you need. Not only does this type of activity build a child's problem solving skills, but it also helps develop their multi-tasking skills when you add conversation into the mix.

There are other forms of puzzles you could work on together, including crosswords, word finds, and of course the ever popular Sudoku. Any one of these can help develop yours and your child's brain power while spending some wonderful quality time together.

If you don't have money to spend on "paper" puzzles (meaning those other than jigsaws), you can always print some out from these websites for free at:

[http://www.teacherhelp.org/puzzles\\_and\\_games.htm](http://www.teacherhelp.org/puzzles_and_games.htm),  
<http://www.mirroreyes.com/crossword/>, <http://www.billybear4kids.com/jigsaw-puzzles/main-page.html>, and <http://www.sudoku.com/program.htm>.

Remember too, that if you don't have a "physical" jigsaw puzzle, there are plenty of free online jigsaws you can do together available from websites such as:

<http://freejigsawpuzzles.com/>, <http://www.jigzone.com/>, or  
<http://www.thekidzpage.com/onlinejigsawpuzzles/index.htm>.

## Home Movie Night

The way the phrase "home movie night" is used here is not to watch movies you have made of your family, but, rather it is to allow each member of your family to select a movie from

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your own DVD or VHS collection and watch them.

Try having each family member select a favorite movie or one that they have not viewed for quite some time to make it more interesting for everyone. Pop up your own popcorn, make your own special "smoothies", and have a healthy snack to go with your movie.

Make it an entire day of family fun and participation. Get everyone involved with the snack making and movie choosing. This can be a great way to spend time together on a rainy day.

You could also do some sort of fun activity during "intermissions", or between movie playing as well to make it more interesting. Such as, to decide which movie will be watched next, try playing a quick game of charades. The winner gets to watch their movie. This way, you're not just "veg-ing out" in front of the television.

## Park Outings

Going to the park can be an outstanding way to spend quality time together as a family. Of course there are all the jungle gyms, slides, and swings you can play on, but there are other things you could also do afterwards.

Collecting wild flowers, pinecones, nuts, and leaves that you could classify later on when you return home is plenty educational and fun. You could also take a shoebox for each of your children and begin a little "memory box" by taking the wild flowers or leaves and pressing them, then placing them inside the shoebox along with the information discovered about the plants such as computer printouts. Take the printouts and glue the nuts, leaves, or flowers to them is another activity you can do with the treasures you find while at the park.

Also, encourage your child(ren) to write down the date they found the park treasures so they can always look back and remember when you spent those moments together as a family. This is an excellent way to strengthen your family bond.

## Museums

What better way to spend time with your family than appreciating fine art? Most museums are free, but you would really need to check with your local area museum to be sure. Some museums may have summertime family oriented activities planned as well. Yet still, there

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may be discounted "family" days for specialized educational museums such as The Center for Science and Industry in Ohio (COSI).

While some may not be free, you can find out which days of the month, week, or year, have been designated as "family" days that offer discounts. Many museums have websites that list most of their information including pricing and hours of operation.

It's never too late, or too soon, to begin the learning process. So keep this in mind when heading off to your local museum. While your children may think this activity will be boring, there are always "battle plans" to make it fun for everyone. You could always visit the museum's website to see what is on display as many museums have time limited exhibits to research first what may be of interest to your child(ren) beforehand. Then make up some list printouts to take along with you that have checklists to be sure that you view everything on the printouts.

You could even put in some random questions to ask your child(ren) while at the museum. Or you could even do a sort of scavenger hunt to see who can find the items on your checklist first.

## Library

Local libraries are a wonderful wealth of information for you and your child(ren). Making plans to visit a library during the summer month's can be a fantastic way to keep the learning process going when the kids are on summer vacation.

Plus, most libraries have a plethora of activities planned during the summer for your child(ren) to enjoy ranging from all age groups. Make it a plan the next time you're running errands to stop by your local library and pick up their activity list for the month to see what's in store. You may just find something interesting and fun for your child(ren) and yourself!

There are more than just books available at most libraries as well. Things like DVD or VHS movies can be checked out, music CD's, audio books, etc. can also be a day of fun that doesn't end once you walk out the library doors.

Checking out and returning items to the library can also help develop your child(ren)'s responsibility skills too. Keep that in mind when you go out to discover what your local library has available for you.

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## Swimming/Playing In Water

What better way to spend a refreshing and playful time with your family than going swimming! Even if you don't have access to a swimming pool in your own backyard, you can always take a trip to your local lake or beach. You won't need money to enjoy the water, but you will need enough gas to get there and back ;-)

Plus, you can always take a picnic basket full of your favorite healthy snacks with you for a quick lunch. Now, if you happen to live in an area that doesn't have access to lakes or oceanfront beaches, why not pull out the garden hose for some watery fun?

Using what you have "on hand" with water is always a super way to have some fun on a hot day. Sprinklers, water pistols, and water balloons are great alternatives to keeping cool and having fun on a hot day. Divide your family up into teams and see who gets the most wet. Have a big bowl of fresh, frosty fruit as a reward for the winning team.

Most apartment communities have swimming pools available to their residents. Why not go for a dip? Also, many other community areas have public pools that are quite inexpensive to get into. Some only charge a quarter for access for the entire day. Visiting your local community pool can help build your child(ren)'s social skills too. And that's always a fabulous idea!

Whatever your plans, don't forget to put on the sunscreen to protect yourself and your children from the harmful UV rays of the sun. This is especially important on extremely hot days.

## Skating

Roller skating is a great way to have a little outdoor fun with your family anytime. Except if it's raining that is ;-). While you can have plenty of fun skating around your neighborhood, why not try heading out to your local park for a different scene?

You could always venture off to your local bicycle trails for an even better skating arena. Most bike trails that are made from blacktop will give you a smoother skate. And, the trails are designed for bikes, joggers, and skaters ONLY. Meaning, you won't have to worry about oncoming traffic from cars. Making it all the more safe for your family to enjoy the outdoors.

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Let's not forget too that learning to roller skate, or roller blade, can be a very enjoyable activity. Especially if the parent is the student and the child is the teacher! Be sure you put on your safety padding and helmet before heading out the front door for your day of learning. Or you could end up worse for wear when returning home!

## **Bike Riding**

Not to be outdone by the previous outdoor activity, riding bikes is always fun to do. And, for grown ups, it takes them back to their youthful childhood.

This is a wonderful way to spend time with your child(ren) while taking a trip down your own "memory lane" in the process. Instead of driving to your local park, why not ride bikes to it? Need to make a quick trip to the corner store? Ride your bikes down.

Of course there are local bicycle trails you can utilize as well. Both paved or natural dirt trails can be loads of fun for your family to enjoy together.

Plus, riding a bicycle is a great way to get some much needed exercise for everyone. Remember when planning extended biking journeys to take a water bottle along with you to recharge your batteries. And always encourage your child(ren) to wear a helmet when biking. Don't forget to set a good example for them by electing to wear a helmet yourself too.

## **Yard Sales**

Finally on our list of family fun activities we have the yard sale. Now, you might be thinking that this cannot possibly be any fun, but it really can.

This is a superb way to rid your home of unwanted, or unused, clutter and to teach your child an alternative way to earn some money. Let your child(ren) help by making up "yard sale signs", gathering up goods to sell, setting up the items for sale in the yard, or garage, and counting out money you have on hand for making change for customers who purchase items.

Also, allow your child(ren) to price their own items they've decided to add to the yard sale, and then add the price tags to those items themselves.

Once they've earned their money by selling their things in the yard, or garage, sale, pool all of the money together, including the money you earned from selling your unwanted items, to pay for your next family fun outing!

Again, this is another great family activity that will teach your child(ren) lots of "real world" skills when it comes to customer service, money, and setting up shop.

## **Conclusion**

I do hope that this e-Book has given you some terrific ideas to begin implementing into your family fun activity list. There is one last idea I would like to leave you with. And that is this: Write down all the free family activities you can think of, including the ones from this e-Book, on separate pieces of paper, place them into a "family fun" container and allow your child(ren) to draw out an activity each day they find themselves bored.

You should always make every day count and try and turn each day into a memorable adventure of fun for everyone! And remember, money doesn't make memories, YOU do!

All the best to you and your family,

John BetanCourt  
FreshX Selective Teams, LLC