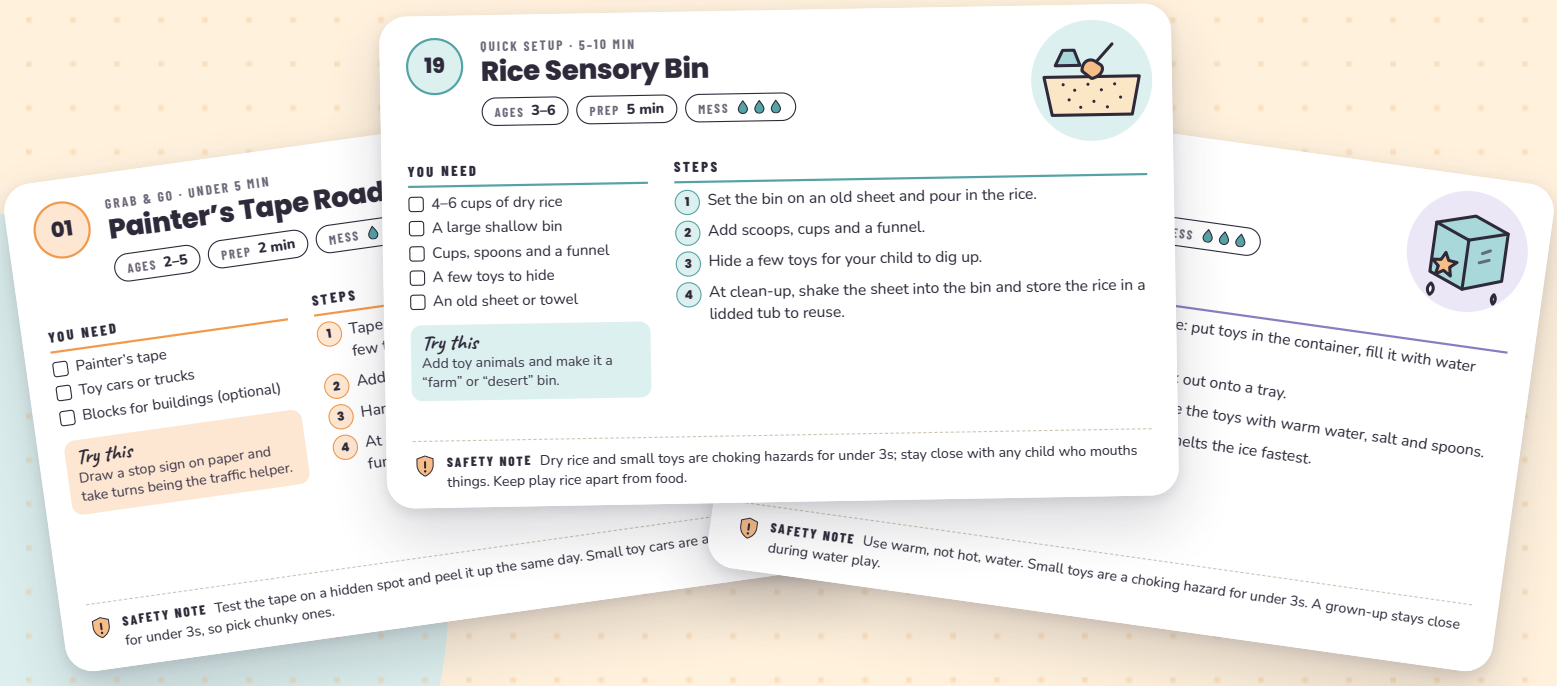
FREE PRINTABLE PACK

AGES 2-6

50 Screen-Free Activities for Toddlers and Preschoolers

50 ideas by setup time

Activity cards sorted by setup time, with the age range, prep time, mess level and supplies on every card.



Under 5 min — GRAB & GO

5–10 min — QUICK SETUP

10–20 min — WORTH THE SETUP

20+ min — WEEKEND PROJECTS

50 activity cards · Quick-find index · Rainy-day picks · Safety guide · Supply checklist · Blank cards

Puddles & Play

PUDDLESANDPLAY.COM

FOR GROWN-UPS · A TWO-MINUTE READ

How to use this pack

Fifty low-prep activities for ages 2 to 6, sorted by how long they take to set up. Pick a card, gather the supplies and go.

1 Pick by time

Under 5 min Grab & Go
Almost no prep. For when dinner is on the stove or you need something right now.
CARDS 1-18 · PAGES 7-15

5–10 min Quick Setup
A few minutes of gathering for a longer stretch of play.
CARDS 19-34 · PAGES 16-23

10–20 min Worth the Setup
A little more prep, a lot more play. Good for afternoons at home.
CARDS 35-44 · PAGES 24-28

20+ min Weekend Projects
Bigger builds and plan-ahead ideas for slow Saturdays.
CARDS 45-50 · PAGES 29-31

Short on ideas? The **Quick-find index** (page 4) lists every card by age, and **Rainy-day picks** (page 6) pulls out 12 indoor favorites.

2 Read the card

AGES A starting point. You know your child, so simplify or stretch any card.

PREP Roughly how long it takes a grown-up to set up.

YOU NEED Mostly things from the kitchen, craft drawer or recycling bin.

STEPS Short, in order, with a "Try this" idea to make it new again.

SAFETY NOTE Read it before you start. Every card has one.

MESS LEVEL

- 1 · **Wipe-up.** A damp cloth will do.
- 2 · **Towel down.** Lay a towel or mat first.
- 3 · **Go big.** Outside, or right before bath time.

3 Print & keep

- Print on letter or A4 paper. On A4, choose "Fit to page".
- Card stock lasts longer if little hands will hold the cards.
- Cut along the dashed line: each card is a half page.
- Hole-punch a corner and keep them on a binder ring, or in a jar by the craft shelf.
- Slip a card into a sheet protector and tick supplies with a dry-erase marker.

4 Good to know

- Every activity is meant for adult-supervised play.
- Read the **Play safety** page (page 3) once before you begin, especially with under 3s around.
- **Printing:** print as many copies as you like for your own family. Teachers and homeschool leaders may print copies for their own class or group.
- Please don't sell or re-upload this file. Share puddlesandplay.com instead, so friends get their own copy.

READ ONCE BEFORE YOU START

Play safety, on one page

The cards flag risks one by one. This page gathers the big ones so you can set up with confidence.

Choking hazards & under 3s

- Toddlers explore with their mouths, and small things can block an airway.
- **Rule of thumb:** if it fits through a toilet paper tube, it's too small for under 3s.
- Common culprits in play: pom-poms, beads, buttons, googly eyes, dry rice, beans and pasta, bottle caps, crayon pieces, marker caps, coins, small toy parts and balloons.
- Keep **button batteries and small magnets** locked away. Get emergency help right away if you think one has been swallowed.

Water play

- Stay within arm's reach for all water play, even a shallow tub or bucket.
- Young children can drown in a few inches of water, quickly and silently.
- Empty tubs, buckets and bins as soon as play ends, and store them upside down.
- Wipe up spills right away so floors don't get slippery.

Food & allergies

- Rice, pasta and salt in these cards are for play, not eating. Keep play supplies apart from food you'll cook.
- Pasta and most playdough contain wheat. Check for allergies first, especially with visiting friends or a class.
- Rinse empty food boxes and tubs before play; traces of nuts or dairy matter for allergic kids.

Art supplies & tools

- Choose washable, non-toxic supplies. In the US, look for the AP seal from ACMI on the label.
- **Grown-ups only:** box cutters, craft knives, hot glue guns and spray sealants.
- Child-safe scissors have rounded tips. Cutting is sit-down time with an adult beside them.
- Collect marker caps as you go, and skip glitter and sequins for little ones.

Everyday checks

Cords & string. Nothing around necks. Keep yarn short and never leave strings on a sleeping child.

Outdoors. "Look, don't taste" for berries, mushrooms and seeds. Wash hands after.

Plastic. Keep bags and bubble wrap away from faces, and recycle them after play.

Heat. Keep play away from stoves, heaters and hot drinks.

Climbing. Keep forts and courses low. Anchor bookcases and dressers to the wall.

Your call. Ages are a guide. Skip anything that doesn't suit your child or space.

In an emergency call 911 (US) or your local emergency number. US Poison Help: **1-800-222-1222**. This page is general play-safety information. Always follow product labels and your own judgment.

FIND SOMETHING FAST

Quick-find index

Every activity by setup time, with the age range and the page it's on.

Under 5 min Grab & Go

01	Painter's Tape Road	2–5	7
02	Sticky Wall Collage	2–4	7
03	Tube Drop	2–5	8
04	Sock Match-Up	2–6	8
05	Freeze Dance	2–6	9
06	The Floor Is Lava	3–6	9
07	Colander Poke	2–4	10
08	Animal Moves	2–6	10
09	Muffin Tin Color Sort	2–5	11
10	Laundry Basket Boat	2–5	11
11	I Spy Colors	2–6	12
12	Water Painting	2–6	12
13	Sticker Lines	2–4	13
14	Blanket Fort Story Time	2–6	13
15	Mirror Me	3–6	14
16	Paper Ball Toss	2–6	14
17	Flashlight Shadows	3–6	15
18	Kitchen Band	2–5	15

10–20 min Worth the Setup

35	Living Room Obstacle Course	2–6	24
36	Paper Plate Fish	3–6	24
37	Salt Tray Writing	3–6	25
38	Leaf Rubbings	3–6	25
39	Tube Binoculars	3–6	26
40	Pretend Grocery Store	2–6	26
41	Bubble Wrap Prints	2–6	27
42	Ramp Races	3–6	27
43	Water Pouring Station	2–5	28
44	Sock Puppet Show	3–6	28

5–10 min Quick Setup

19	Rice Sensory Bin	3–6	16
20	Toy Car Wash	2–5	16
21	Sticky Note Match	3–6	17
22	Cardboard Box Car	2–6	17
23	Playdough Tool Tray	2–6	18
24	Snip Strips	3–6	18
25	Pasta Threading	3–6	19
26	Sink or Float	3–6	19
27	Tape Shape Hop	2–5	20
28	Backyard Treasure Hunt	2–6	20
29	Tong Transfer	3–5	21
30	Mailbox Posting	2–4	21
31	Bottle Bowling	2–6	22
32	Coffee Filter Colors	3–6	22
33	Paper Bridge Challenge	4–6	23
34	Story Basket	3–6	23

20+ min Weekend Projects

45	Frozen Toy Rescue	3–6	29
46	Cardboard Box House	2–6	29
47	Nature Suncatcher	2–6	30
48	Mud Kitchen	2–6	30
49	Junk Robot	3–6	31
50	Painted Story Stones	3–6	31

STOCK UP ONCE, PLAY ALL YEAR

Supply checklist

Everyday things these 50 cards use again and again. You probably have most of them already.

Kitchen

- [ ] Muffin tin
- [ ] Colander
- [ ] Kitchen tongs
- [ ] Measuring cups & funnel
- [ ] Baking tray with sides
- [ ] Plastic bowls & containers
- [ ] Wooden spoons, pots & pans
- [ ] Dry rice (play only)
- [ ] Large tube pasta (play only)
- [ ] Salt (play only)
- [ ] Coffee filters
- [ ] Sponges

Craft drawer

- [ ] Painter's tape
- [ ] Masking tape
- [ ] Washable markers
- [ ] Crayons
- [ ] Washable paint & brushes
- [ ] Child-safe scissors
- [ ] Glue sticks
- [ ] Clear contact paper
- [ ] Paper plates
- [ ] Colored & printer paper
- [ ] Stickers
- [ ] Pipe cleaners
- [ ] Sticky notes

Recycling bin

- [ ] Cardboard boxes, big & small
- [ ] Toilet paper & paper towel tubes
- [ ] Plastic bottles with lids
- [ ] Egg cartons
- [ ] Shoeboxes
- [ ] Clean food boxes & tubs
- [ ] Junk mail & old cards
- [ ] Bubble wrap

Around the house

- [ ] Laundry basket
- [ ] Light sheet & blankets
- [ ] Cushions & pillows
- [ ] Flashlight
- [ ] Spare socks
- [ ] Towels
- [ ] Old toothbrush
- [ ] Spray bottle
- [ ] Large shallow bin
- [ ] Toy cars & animals
- [ ] Blocks
- [ ] Playdough
- [ ] A speaker for music

Outside

- [ ] Bucket
- [ ] Big paintbrushes
- [ ] Smooth palm-sized stones
- [ ] Leaves & petals
- [ ] A patch of dirt

Make a grab box

Keep painter's tape, a few tubes, paper plates, washable markers, stickers and pipe cleaners in one shoebox. Most of the **under-5-minute** cards start from that box.

Fill the blank lines with your own extras:

- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____

STUCK INSIDE?

Rainy-day picks

Twelve indoor activities, grouped by the kind of afternoon you're having.

Burn energy

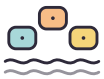
For bouncing-off-the-walls mornings



Freeze Dance

Big movement, zero setup.

Ages 2–6 · Prep 1 min · Card 5, p. 9



The Floor Is Lava

Jump and balance on couch cushions.

Ages 3–6 · Prep 3 min · Card 6, p. 9



Animal Moves

Crawl, hop and stretch across the room.

Ages 2–6 · Prep None · Card 8, p. 10



Living Room Obstacle Course

A full loop of crawling, hopping and tossing.

Ages 2–6 · Prep 15 min · Card 35, p. 24

Focus & build

For busy hands and curious minds



Tong Transfer

Steady squeezing work for little hands.

Ages 3–5 · Prep 5 min · Card 29, p. 21



Pasta Threading

Slow threading and simple patterns.

Ages 3–6 · Prep 5 min · Card 25, p. 19



Paper Bridge Challenge

A building puzzle with a big "why".

Ages 4–6 · Prep 5 min · Card 33, p. 23



Ramp Races

Test, change one thing, test again.

Ages 3–6 · Prep 10 min · Card 42, p. 27

Quiet & calm

For winding down before lunch or bed



Blanket Fort Story Time

A cozy nook for books and a flashlight.

Ages 2–6 · Prep 5 min · Card 14, p. 13



Flashlight Shadows

Dim the lights and settle the room.

Ages 3–6 · Prep 2 min · Card 17, p. 15



Salt Tray Writing

Quiet tracing with one finger.

Ages 3–6 · Prep 10 min · Card 37, p. 25



Story Basket

Sit together and build a silly story.

Ages 3–6 · Prep 5 min · Card 34, p. 23



A simple rainy-day rhythm

Start with something that moves, follow it with something that builds, and end with something quiet. One card from each column fills a long morning, and kids often help pick the next one.

Our rainy-day plan

MORNING	AFTER LUNCH	LATE AFTERNOON
Activity _____	Activity _____	Activity _____
Card # _____	Card # _____	Card # _____

01

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Painter's Tape Road

AGES 2–5 | PREP 2 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Painter's tape
- [ ] Toy cars or trucks
- [ ] Blocks for buildings (optional)

Try this
Draw a stop sign on paper and take turns being the traffic helper.

STEPS

1. Tape a long, curvy road across a hard floor or low rug, with a few turns.
2. Add a square "parking lot" and a few tape parking spaces.
3. Hand over the cars and let them drive, park and line up.
4. At clean-up, let your child peel the tape up. Peeling is half the fun.

SAFETY NOTE Test the tape on a hidden spot and peel it up the same day. Small toy cars are a choking hazard for under 3s, so pick chunky ones.

02

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Sticky Wall Collage

AGES 2–4 | PREP 3 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Clear contact paper
- [ ] Painter's tape
- [ ] Paper scraps, tissue paper, leaves

Try this
Cut scraps into shapes and ask, "Can you find a triangle?"

STEPS

1. Tape a sheet of contact paper to a wall at your child's height, sticky side out.
2. Put a pile of paper scraps and other flat bits in a bowl nearby.
3. Let them press pieces on, peel them off and move them around.
4. Lay a second sheet on top to seal a finished picture.

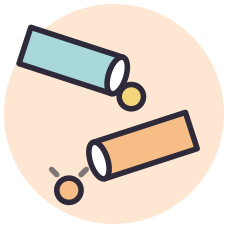
SAFETY NOTE For under 3s, use only pieces too big to fit through a toilet paper tube. Skip pom-poms, sequins and buttons.

03

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Tube Drop

AGES 2–5 | PREP 3 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] 2–3 paper towel or toilet paper tubes
- [ ] Painter's tape
- [ ] Things to drop: balled-up socks, large pom-poms
- [ ] A basket

Try this
Ask your child to guess which item will come out fastest.

STEPS

1. Tape the tubes to a wall or door on a slant, so one feeds into the next.
2. Put a basket at the bottom to catch everything.
3. Drop items in the top and watch them shoot out the bottom.
4. Move the tubes together to build a new route.

SAFETY NOTE Pom-poms are a choking hazard for under 3s. For little ones, drop balled-up socks or anything too big to fit through a toilet paper tube.

04

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Sock Match-Up

AGES 2–6 | PREP 1 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A basket of clean, unmatched socks

Try this
Hide a few socks around the room first for a sock treasure hunt.

STEPS

1. Tip the socks into a pile on the floor.
2. Hold up one sock and ask your child to find its partner.
3. Older kids can race a timer, or sort by color, size or owner.
4. Roll each pair into a ball and toss it back into the basket.

SAFETY NOTE Low risk. Check little socks for loose bows or buttons before handing them to under 3s.

05

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Freeze Dance

AGES 2–6 | PREP 1 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Music on a speaker or radio
- [ ] Open floor space

Try this
Play a slow song next for a calm-down round.

STEPS

1. Play music and dance.
2. Pause the music. Everyone freezes like a statue.
3. Before each round, call a freeze shape: tall tree, tiny mouse, starfish.
4. Take turns being the one who stops the music.

SAFETY NOTE Push back coffee tables and clear toys first. Dance barefoot or in grippy socks on hard floors to avoid slips.

06

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

The Floor Is Lava

AGES 3–6 | PREP 3 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Couch cushions and pillows
- [ ] Small rugs, towels or folded blankets

Try this
Add a “safe island” in the middle where everyone can rest.

STEPS

1. Spread cushions and towels across the floor as stepping stones.
2. Call “The floor is lava!” and cross the room without touching the floor.
3. Move the stones further apart, or add a rule like “hop on one foot”.
4. Stack the cushions back on the couch together at the end.

SAFETY NOTE Lay stones on a rug, not slippery floors, and away from table corners, windows and stairs. No climbing on furniture.

07

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Colander Poke

AGES 2–4 | PREP 1 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A colander
- [ ] Pipe cleaners

Try this
Ages 3+: call a color and see how fast they can find it.

STEPS

1. Turn the colander upside down on the floor or a tray.
2. Show how to push a pipe cleaner through one of the holes.
3. Let your child fill it up, then pull them out one at a time.
4. Count them, or sort them by color as they come out.

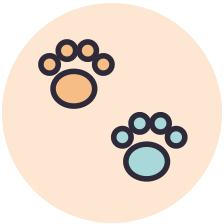
SAFETY NOTE Fold over the sharp tips of each pipe cleaner first, and stay close so they stay out of mouths.

08

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Animal Moves

AGES 2–6 | PREP None | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Floor space
- [ ] Optional: animal names on slips of paper in a bowl

Try this
Let your child invent a brand-new animal and its move.

STEPS

1. Call out an animal and show its move: bear crawl, crab walk, frog jump, flamingo stand.
2. Take turns choosing the next animal.
3. Make a race across the room: bear there, crab back.
4. Finish slow with a “sleepy sloth” stretch on the floor.

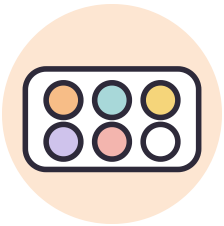
SAFETY NOTE Clear a wide path. Crab walks and frog jumps are best on carpet or grass.

09

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Muffin Tin Color Sort

AGES 2–5 | PREP 3 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Muffin tin
- [ ] Colored paper scraps
- [ ] A bowl of things to sort: blocks, lids, crayons, toys

Try this
Name each color out loud together as it goes in.

STEPS

1. Put a scrap of colored paper in each cup of the tin.
2. Mix the items together in a bowl.
3. Your child drops each one into the matching color cup.
4. Next time, sort by size or shape instead, or add tongs.

SAFETY NOTE For under 3s, only sort things too big to fit through a toilet paper tube.

10

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Laundry Basket Boat

AGES 2–5 | PREP 1 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Empty laundry basket
- [ ] A pillow
- [ ] Stuffed animal passengers

Try this
Spread a blue blanket on the floor for the ocean.

STEPS

1. Put a pillow in the basket and add a stuffed animal crew.
2. Your child climbs in and you head out to sea. Rock gently and call out islands and whales.
3. They steer with a paper plate wheel or a wooden spoon oar.
4. Swap roles: they give the stuffed animals a ride.

SAFETY NOTE Grown-ups do the pushing: slowly, on carpet only, nowhere near stairs, and keep the basket upright.

11

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

I Spy Colors

AGES 2–6 | PREP None | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Nothing at all
- [ ] Optional: a cardboard tube spyglass

Try this
Handy for waiting rooms and long lines too.

STEPS

1. Say “I spy something… blue!” and let your child guess.
2. Younger kids can walk over and touch something blue.
3. Ages 4+: give a sound clue, like “something that starts with /b/”.
4. Take turns being the spy.

SAFETY NOTE Low risk. Keep the game inside the room so nobody wanders off to find things.

12

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Water Painting

AGES 2–6 | PREP 2 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A small bucket or cup of water
- [ ] Large paintbrushes or a sponge
- [ ] A fence, sidewalk, steps or wall

Try this
On a hot day, race to finish a picture before it dries.

STEPS

1. Put a little water in the container and head outside.
2. “Paint” the fence, steps or sidewalk with water.
3. Watch the marks fade in the sun, then paint again.
4. Try painting letters, shapes or a giant sunshine.

SAFETY NOTE Water play needs a grown-up within arm’s reach, even with a small bucket. Tip the water out as soon as you finish.

13

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Sticker Lines

AGES 2–4 | PREP 2 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Stickers (dot stickers are ideal)
- [ ] Paper
- [ ] A marker

Try this
Ages 4+: put a sticker on every dot of a number you draw.

STEPS

1. Draw a few thick lines on paper: straight, zigzag and wavy.
2. Lift the edge of each sticker a little to give small fingers a head start.
3. Your child places stickers along each line.
4. Next time, draw a big circle or the first letter of their name.

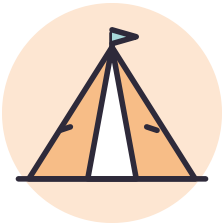
SAFETY NOTE Stickers can be a choking hazard for under 3s. Stay close and collect the backing paper as you go.

14

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Blanket Fort Story Time

AGES 2–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] 2 chairs or a table
- [ ] A light sheet
- [ ] Pillows
- [ ] Books and a flashlight

Try this
Leave it up for quiet time after lunch.

STEPS

1. Drape a sheet over chairs or a table and tuck the edges under books.
2. Add pillows inside to make it cozy.
3. Bring in a flashlight and a small stack of books.
4. Read inside, or let your child “read” the pictures to a stuffed animal.

SAFETY NOTE Use a light sheet for the roof, not heavy blankets, and nothing heavy on top. Keep cords and clips out of the fort.

15

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Mirror Me

AGES 3–6 | PREP None | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Nothing at all
- [ ] Optional: a hand mirror

Try this
Play it sitting down as a wind-down before bed.

STEPS

1. Face each other. You are the “mirror” and copy every move your child makes.
2. Switch: now they copy you. Start slow: lift an arm, wiggle your fingers.
3. Change the speed: super slow, then fast, then slow again.
4. Try a sound mirror: clap a rhythm and have them clap it back.

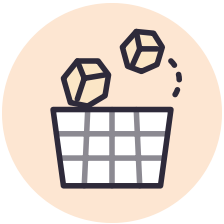
SAFETY NOTE Low risk. Keep movements gentle and play in a clear space.

16

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Paper Ball Toss

AGES 2–6 | PREP 2 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Scrap paper or junk mail
- [ ] A laundry basket or box
- [ ] Painter’s tape for a throw line

Try this
Ages 4+: write a number on the basket and aim for exactly that many.

STEPS

1. Crumple paper into balls together. Squeezing is great hand work.
2. Tape a throw line on the floor.
3. Toss balls into the basket, and take a step back after each hit.
4. Count the balls in the basket at the end.

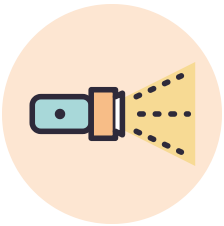
SAFETY NOTE Pull out staples and plastic windows from junk mail first.

17

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Flashlight Shadows

AGES 3–6 | PREP 2 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A flashlight
- [ ] A blank wall
- [ ] Toy animals

Try this
Tell a shadow story with two or three toy animals.

STEPS

1. Dim the room and shine the flashlight at a blank wall.
2. Hold a toy animal in the beam and watch its shadow appear.
3. Move it closer to the light, then further away. What happens to the size?
4. Try hand shadows: a bird, a dog, a bunny.

SAFETY NOTE Use a flashlight with a screwed-shut battery cover. Coin and button batteries are very dangerous if swallowed.

18

GRAB & GO · UNDER 5 MIN

Kitchen Band

AGES 2–5 | PREP 2 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Pots, pans and plastic bowls
- [ ] Wooden spoons
- [ ] A plastic container with a lid and a spoonful of dry rice

Try this
Play a beat and have your child copy it back.

STEPS

1. Turn pots and bowls upside down on the floor.
2. Play loud, then soft, then fast, then slow.
3. Make a shaker: rice in the container, lid taped shut.
4. March around the kitchen in a parade.

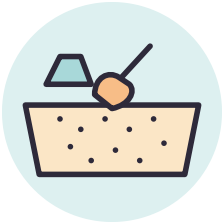
SAFETY NOTE Tape shaker lids shut so rice can't spill out (a choking hazard for under 3s). Keep the band away from the stove.

19

QUICK SETUP · 5–10 MIN

Rice Sensory Bin

AGES 3–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS 💧💧💧



YOU NEED

- [ ] 4–6 cups of dry rice
- [ ] A large shallow bin
- [ ] Cups, spoons and a funnel
- [ ] A few toys to hide
- [ ] An old sheet or towel

Try this
Add toy animals and make it a "farm" or "desert" bin.

STEPS

1. Set the bin on an old sheet and pour in the rice.
2. Add scoops, cups and a funnel.
3. Hide a few toys for your child to dig up.
4. At clean-up, shake the sheet into the bin and store the rice in a lidded tub to reuse.

SAFETY NOTE Dry rice and small toys are choking hazards for under 3s; stay close with any child who mouths things. Keep play rice apart from food.

20

QUICK SETUP · 5–10 MIN

Toy Car Wash

AGES 2–5 | PREP 5 min | MESS 💧💧



YOU NEED

- [ ] A plastic tub of warm water
- [ ] A drop of dish soap
- [ ] Sponges and an old toothbrush
- [ ] Toy cars and towels

Try this
Plastic animals and dolls can have a bath too.

STEPS

1. Set the tub on a towel and add a drop of soap.
2. Roll the cars through some dirt or sand first, or just pretend they're muddy.
3. Scrub them clean with sponges and the toothbrush.
4. Line them up on a dry towel to "dry off".

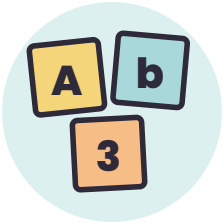
SAFETY NOTE Keep the water shallow and a grown-up within arm's reach the whole time. Empty the tub right away.

21

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Sticky Note Match

AGES 3–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Sticky notes
- [ ] A marker
- [ ] A door, wall or window

Try this
Use the letters in their name and spell it at the end.

STEPS

1. Write letters, numbers or colors on sticky notes and stick them on a door.
2. Call one out, or hold up a matching card or toy.
3. Your child finds it, pulls it off and brings it back.
4. Ages 4–6: put lowercase letters on the door and match uppercase ones to them.

SAFETY NOTE Low risk. Keep the notes at your child's height so nobody climbs to reach them.

22

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Cardboard Box Car

AGES 2–6 | PREP 10 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A box your child can sit in
- [ ] Paper plates
- [ ] Markers or crayons
- [ ] Tape

Try this
Make a gas station from a shoebox and a jump rope "hose".

STEPS

1. Grown-up: cut off the top flaps of the box.
2. Tape on paper plates for wheels and a steering wheel.
3. Your child draws headlights, a number and a license plate.
4. Go on a road trip around the house.

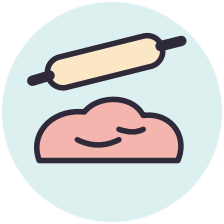
SAFETY NOTE Box cutters and craft knives are for grown-ups only. Check the box for staples before kids climb in.

23

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Playdough Tool Tray

AGES 2–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Playdough
- [ ] A rolling pin
- [ ] Cookie cutters
- [ ] Plastic knife, potato masher, garlic press

Try this
Press toy animal feet into the dough to make tracks.

STEPS

1. Set each tool in a muffin tin or on a tray so everything is easy to see.
2. Show how to roll, cut and squeeze.
3. Make pretend “pancakes”, “snakes” and “pizzas”.
4. Store the dough in an airtight tub so it lasts.

SAFETY NOTE Playdough is not food. Most contains wheat and a lot of salt, so supervise kids who taste things and anyone with a wheat allergy.

24

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Snip Strips

AGES 3–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Child-safe scissors
- [ ] Paper strips about 1 inch wide
- [ ] A marker
- [ ] A bowl

Try this
Ages 5+: draw wavy or zigzag lines to cut along.

STEPS

1. Draw lines across each strip, a couple of fingers apart.
2. Show the “thumbs up” grip: thumb in the top hole.
3. Your child snips along each line into the bowl.
4. Save the snippets for a glue collage later.

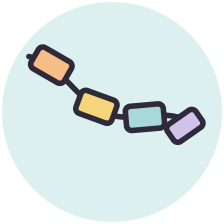
SAFETY NOTE Scissors are sit-down time with a grown-up beside them. Use rounded child-safe scissors and put them away afterwards.

25

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Pasta Threading

AGES 3–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Large tube pasta (rigatoni or penne)
- [ ] Pipe cleaners, or yarn with a taped tip
- [ ] Washable markers (optional)

Try this
Color the pasta with markers first for patterns.

STEPS

1. Knot one end of the yarn and wrap tape around the other to make a stiff “needle”. Pipe cleaners are easier for beginners.
2. Thread the pasta on one piece at a time.
3. Make a pattern: colored, plain, colored, plain.
4. Turn it into a garland or a loose bracelet.

SAFETY NOTE Dry pasta is a choking hazard for under 3s and contains wheat. Never leave strings on a child during naps or unsupervised play.

26

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Sink or Float

AGES 3–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A tub or big bowl of water
- [ ] A towel
- [ ] Objects to test: spoon, cork, lid, leaf, crayon, sponge, toy block

Try this
Draw two columns on paper and record the results with a tick.

STEPS

1. Lay the objects on a towel next to the tub.
2. Before each one, ask “Will it sink or float?”
3. Drop it in and sort the objects into a sink pile and a float pile.
4. Challenge: can you make a floating lid sink by loading it up?

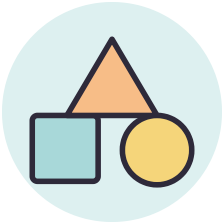
SAFETY NOTE A grown-up stays within arm’s reach during all water play. Empty the tub as soon as you finish.

27

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Tape Shape Hop

AGES 2–5 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Painter's tape
- [ ] Floor space

Try this
Ages 4+: call two shapes in a row to remember.

STEPS

1. Tape 4 to 6 big shapes on the floor: square, triangle, rectangle, a wobbly circle.
2. Call a shape. Your child hops, crawls or tiptoes to it.
3. For older kids, write colors or numbers inside the shapes.
4. Let your child call the shapes for you.

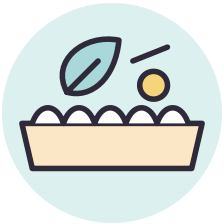
SAFETY NOTE Hop in bare feet or grippy socks, and pull the tape up the same day.

28

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Backyard Treasure Hunt

AGES 2–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] An egg carton
- [ ] A marker
- [ ] A yard, park or garden

Try this
Ages 5+: add "something soft" and "something bumpy".

STEPS

1. Draw a simple picture or color dot in each cup: leaf, stone, stick, something yellow.
2. Head outside and fill each cup with a matching find.
3. Look closely at your finds together.
4. Wash hands when you come back inside.

SAFETY NOTE Teach "look, don't taste": no berries, mushrooms or seeds in mouths. Keep small stones away from under 3s.

29

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Tong Transfer

AGES 3–5 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Kitchen or salad tongs
- [ ] Two bowls
- [ ] Pom-poms, cotton balls or balled-up socks

Try this
Use a kitchen timer and try to beat your last time.

STEPS

1. Fill one bowl with the soft items and put an empty bowl beside it.
2. Show how to squeeze the tongs to pick one up.
3. Move everything from one bowl to the other.
4. Make it harder: one item into each cup of an ice cube tray.

SAFETY NOTE Pom-poms and cotton balls are choking hazards for under 3s. Use balled-up socks for little ones.

30

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Mailbox Posting

AGES 2–4 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A shoebox with a lid
- [ ] Old cards, envelopes or junk mail
- [ ] Markers

Try this
Write each family member's name on an envelope to deliver.

STEPS

1. Grown-up: cut a long slot in the lid of the shoebox.
2. Let your child decorate it as a mailbox.
3. Hand over the "mail" and let them post each piece through the slot.
4. Open the lid, deliver the mail around the house, and start again.

SAFETY NOTE Cutting the slot is a grown-up job. Remove staples and plastic windows from junk mail.

31

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Bottle Bowling

AGES 2–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] 6 empty plastic bottles with lids
- [ ] A soft ball
- [ ] Painter's tape

Try this
Number the bottles and add up the ones that fall.

STEPS

1. Set the bottles up in a triangle at the end of a hallway.
2. Tape a line to roll from.
3. Roll the ball and count how many fall down.
4. Older kids can keep score with tally marks.

SAFETY NOTE Keep the lids on tight so small caps aren't loose. Use a soft ball indoors.

32

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Coffee Filter Colors

AGES 3–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] White coffee filters
- [ ] Washable markers
- [ ] A spray bottle or dropper of water
- [ ] A tray

Try this
Ask what new colors appear where two colors meet.

STEPS

1. Flatten a coffee filter on a tray and scribble on it with washable markers.
2. Spray or drip a little water onto the filter.
3. Watch the colors spread and mix.
4. When dry, pinch the middle and twist a pipe cleaner around it to make a butterfly.

SAFETY NOTE Washable markers only, and wipe up drips so floors don't get slippery.

33

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Paper Bridge Challenge

AGES 4–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Sheets of paper
- [ ] Two stacks of books
- [ ] Small blocks or toy cars for weight

Try this
Try a rolled-paper tube bridge next.

STEPS

1. Lay a flat sheet of paper across two book stacks. Add one block. Does it hold?
2. Fold a new sheet like a fan and try again.
3. Count how many blocks each bridge can hold.
4. Ask: why do you think the folded bridge is stronger?

SAFETY NOTE Low risk. Keep small blocks away from younger siblings under 3.

34

QUICK SETUP · 5-10 MIN

Story Basket

AGES 3–6 | PREP 5 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A basket or bag
- [ ] 3–5 random household things: a spoon, a hat, a toy animal, a cup

Try this
Write the story down and let your child draw the pictures.

STEPS

1. Fill the basket while your child isn't looking.
2. Pull out one object and start a story: "Once upon a time there was a spoon..."
3. Take turns pulling out the next object and adding to the story.
4. The story ends when the basket is empty.

SAFETY NOTE Low risk. Leave out keys, batteries and small objects if younger siblings are playing.

35

WORTH THE SETUP · 10-20 MIN

Living Room Obstacle Course

AGES 2–6 | PREP 15 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Cushions
- [ ] A table to crawl under
- [ ] Painter's tape line to balance on
- [ ] A blanket tunnel
- [ ] A basket to toss into

Try this
Use a kitchen timer and cheer every new best time.

STEPS

1. Lay out 4 to 6 stations in a loop: crawl, balance, hop, toss.
2. Walk through it slowly together the first time.
3. Time each run, or add rules like "carry a teddy".
4. Let your child redesign the course for you.

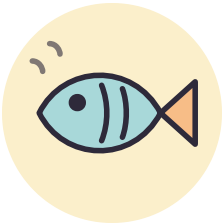
SAFETY NOTE Keep everything low to the ground. No climbing on shelves or stacked furniture. Pad sharp corners and landing spots.

36

WORTH THE SETUP · 10-20 MIN

Paper Plate Fish

AGES 3–6 | PREP 10 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A paper plate
- [ ] Washable paint or markers
- [ ] Child-safe scissors
- [ ] Glue stick
- [ ] Tissue paper scraps

Try this
Make a whole school of fish on a string.

STEPS

1. Cut a triangle out of the plate to make the mouth.
2. Glue the triangle on the opposite side as the tail.
3. Paint the plate, or glue on tissue paper "scales".
4. Add a big eye with a marker and hang your fish in a window.

SAFETY NOTE A grown-up makes the first cut or helps with scissors. Washable paint only, and sit down to cut.

37

WORTH THE SETUP · 10–20 MIN

Salt Tray Writing

AGES 3–6 | PREP 10 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A baking tray with sides
- [ ] About 1 cup of salt
- [ ] Colored paper
- [ ] Letter or shape cards

Try this
Draw the first letter of each family member's name.

STEPS

1. Lay colored paper in the tray and pour in a thin layer of salt.
2. Show a letter or shape and let your child draw it with one finger.
3. Shake the tray gently to "erase" and try another.
4. Younger kids can draw lines, circles and dots.

SAFETY NOTE Keep salty fingers away from eyes, wash hands after, and supervise kids who might eat the salt.

38

WORTH THE SETUP · 10–20 MIN

Leaf Rubbings

AGES 3–6 | PREP 10 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Fresh, flat leaves
- [ ] Thin paper (printer paper works)
- [ ] Crayons with the paper peeled off
- [ ] Tape

Try this
Cut out the rubbings and make a leaf garland.

STEPS

1. Collect a few flat, fresh leaves on a walk.
2. Put them vein side up under a sheet of paper and tape the corners down.
3. Rub the side of a crayon over the paper and watch the leaf appear.
4. Try new colors and compare the leaf shapes.

SAFETY NOTE Skip any plant you don't know, and wash hands afterwards. Broken crayon bits are a choking hazard for under 3s.

39

WORTH THE SETUP · 10-20 MIN

Tube Binoculars

AGES 3–6 | PREP 10 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] 2 toilet paper tubes
- [ ] Tape
- [ ] Markers or stickers

Try this
Draw what you spotted when you get back inside.

STEPS

1. Tape the two tubes side by side.
2. Decorate them with markers or stickers.
3. Go on a looking walk: indoors, in the yard or at a window.
4. Make a list of 5 things to spot: a bird, something red, a fluffy cloud.

SAFETY NOTE Skip the neck strap. Cords around the neck are a strangulation risk for young children.

40

WORTH THE SETUP · 10-20 MIN

Pretend Grocery Store

AGES 2–6 | PREP 15 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Clean, empty food boxes and plastic tubs
- [ ] A basket or tote bag
- [ ] Paper and a marker
- [ ] Toy or paper money

Try this
Ages 5+: give them 10 pennies (on paper) to spend.

STEPS

1. Set up “shelves” on a low table or the couch.
2. Make simple price tags: 1, 2 or 3 dots.
3. Your child shops with a picture list while you run the checkout.
4. Swap: they’re the cashier and you’re the shopper.

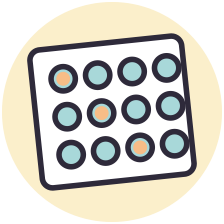
SAFETY NOTE Boxes and plastic tubs only: skip cans with sharp rims. Rinse containers well if anyone has a food allergy.

41

WORTH THE SETUP · 10-20 MIN

Bubble Wrap Prints

AGES 2–6 | PREP 10 min | MESS 💧💧💧



YOU NEED

- [ ] A sheet of bubble wrap
- [ ] Washable paint
- [ ] A brush or sponge
- [ ] Paper
- [ ] Tape

Try this
Pop the clean bubbles at the end as a reward.

STEPS

1. Tape the bubble wrap to the table, bubbles up.
2. Paint over the bubbles with one or two colors.
3. Lay paper on top, press all over, and peel back to see the dotty print.
4. Try printing on a paper bag to make wrapping paper.

SAFETY NOTE Plastic wrap is a suffocation risk: keep it away from faces and recycle it when you're done. Washable paint only.

42

WORTH THE SETUP · 10-20 MIN

Ramp Races

AGES 3–6 | PREP 10 min | MESS 💧



YOU NEED

- [ ] A long piece of cardboard or a baking tray
- [ ] Books to prop it up
- [ ] Toy cars

Try this
Mark where each car stops with a piece of tape.

STEPS

1. Prop one end of the ramp on a short stack of books.
2. Race two cars side by side. Which one wins?
3. Add more books to make it steeper. Does the winner change?
4. Lay a towel on the ramp and see what happens.

SAFETY NOTE Keep the ramp low and steady. Small cars and wheels are a choking hazard for under 3s.

43

WORTH THE SETUP · 10-20 MIN

Water Pouring Station

AGES 2–5 | PREP 10 min | MESS 💧💧💧



YOU NEED

- [ ] A large tub with a few inches of water
- [ ] Measuring cups, funnels and plastic jugs
- [ ] A sponge or turkey baster
- [ ] Towels

Try this
A drop of food coloring makes pouring easier to see.

STEPS

1. Set the tub on thick towels, or outside on the grass.
2. Show how to pour from cup to cup and through the funnel.
3. Challenge: fill a jug using only the sponge or baster.
4. Mop up together at the end.

SAFETY NOTE Water play always needs a grown-up within arm's reach, even in a small tub. Empty it right after. Food coloring can stain.

44

WORTH THE SETUP · 10-20 MIN

Sock Puppet Show

AGES 3–6 | PREP 15 min | MESS 💧💧



YOU NEED

- [ ] Old socks
- [ ] Markers
- [ ] Paper scraps and a glue stick
- [ ] A sheet over a table for the stage

Try this
Make paper tickets and line up the stuffed animals as the crowd.

STEPS

1. Turn socks into animals with markers and glued paper ears or spots.
2. Drape a sheet over a table and kneel behind it.
3. Put on a short show: a hello, a problem and a happy ending.
4. Swap: you perform and your child is the audience.

SAFETY NOTE Skip googly eyes, buttons and pom-poms for under 3s; they are choking hazards. Draw features on instead.

45

WEEKEND PROJECTS · 20+ MIN

Frozen Toy Rescue

AGES 3–6 | PREP 15 min + overnight | MESS 💧💧💧



YOU NEED

- [ ] A plastic container and water
- [ ] Small plastic toys
- [ ] Salt, spoons and squeeze bottles of warm water
- [ ] A tray and towels

Try this
Freeze in layers so toys sit at different depths.

STEPS

1. The night before: put toys in the container, fill it with water and freeze.
2. Pop the ice block out onto a tray.
3. Let your child free the toys with warm water, salt and spoons.
4. Talk about what melts the ice fastest.

SAFETY NOTE Use warm, not hot, water. Small toys are a choking hazard for under 3s. A grown-up stays close during water play.

46

WEEKEND PROJECTS · 20+ MIN

Cardboard Box House

AGES 2–6 | PREP 30 min | MESS 💧💧



YOU NEED

- [ ] A big box (appliance or moving box)
- [ ] A box cutter (grown-ups only)
- [ ] Packing tape
- [ ] Crayons, markers or paint

Try this
Add a mail slot and use it with Mailbox Posting (card 30).

STEPS

1. Grown-up: cut a door on three sides so it swings open, and cut a window or two.
2. Tape any weak seams from the inside.
3. Your child decorates: bricks, flowers, a house number.
4. Move in a pillow, some books and a flashlight.

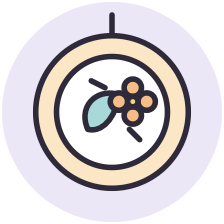
SAFETY NOTE Box cutters are grown-ups only; put the blade away before kids join in. Remove staples and packing plastic.

47

WEEKEND PROJECTS · 20+ MIN

Nature Suncatcher

AGES 2–6 | PREP 20 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] A paper plate
- [ ] Clear contact paper
- [ ] Petals, leaves and grass
- [ ] Scissors (grown-up)
- [ ] Tape

Try this
Make one each season and compare the colors.

STEPS

1. Grown-up: cut the middle out of the paper plate to make a frame.
2. Stick contact paper across the back, sticky side showing through.
3. Your child presses petals and leaves onto the sticky side.
4. Seal with a second sheet, trim, and tape it to a sunny window.

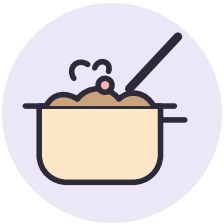
SAFETY NOTE Pick from your own garden or ask first, skip plants you don't know, and wash hands after. Grown-up handles the scissors.

48

WEEKEND PROJECTS · 20+ MIN

Mud Kitchen

AGES 2–6 | PREP 20 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Old pots, pans, spoons and muffin tins
- [ ] A bucket of water
- [ ] A patch of dirt or a tub of soil
- [ ] Leaves, sticks and petals

Try this
Write a pretend menu on cardboard together.

STEPS

1. Set up a low crate, bench or step outside as the counter.
2. Add water to dirt and stir up mud "soup", "pies" and "cupcakes".
3. Decorate with petals, sticks and leaves.
4. Rinse tools, boots and hands at the end.

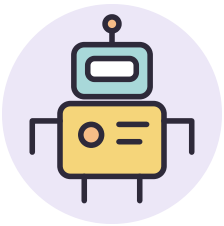
SAFETY NOTE Pretend food only, no tasting. A grown-up stays close to the water bucket, and everyone washes hands afterwards.

49

WEEKEND PROJECTS · 20+ MIN

Junk Robot

AGES 3–6 | PREP 20 min | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] Clean boxes, tubes and plastic tubs
- [ ] Masking tape
- [ ] Markers
- [ ] Foil and bottle caps (ages 4+)

Try this
Ask: what does your robot do when nobody is watching?

STEPS

1. Pick a box for the body and a smaller one for the head.
2. Tape on tube arms and legs.
3. Add buttons, dials and lights with markers, foil and bottle caps.
4. Give your robot a name and a job.

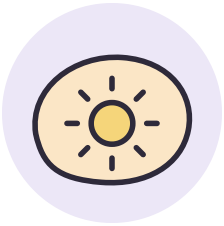
SAFETY NOTE Bottle caps are choking hazards for under 3s. Hot glue is for grown-ups only. Rinse containers first.

50

WEEKEND PROJECTS · 20+ MIN

Painted Story Stones

AGES 3–6 | PREP 20 min + drying | MESS



YOU NEED

- [ ] 6–10 smooth stones, palm-sized
- [ ] Washable paint or paint pens
- [ ] Paintbrushes
- [ ] Newspaper

Try this
Keep them in a bag and use them with Story Basket (card 34).

STEPS

1. Wash and dry the stones.
2. Paint one simple picture on each: sun, tree, house, cat, boat, moon.
3. Let them dry completely.
4. Pull out 3 stones and tell a story that uses all three.

SAFETY NOTE Choose stones too big to fit through a toilet paper tube. Any sealant spray is a grown-up job, done outside.

51

OUR FAMILY FAVORITE · OUR CLASS FAVORITE

Draw it here

AGES _____ PREP _____ MESS

YOU NEED

- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

STEPS

1.
2.
3.
4.

SAFETY NOTE

52

OUR FAMILY FAVORITE · OUR CLASS FAVORITE

Draw it here

AGES _____ PREP _____ MESS

YOU NEED

- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

STEPS

1.
2.
3.
4.

SAFETY NOTE



FOR GROWN-UPS · TRAVELING THIS SEASON?

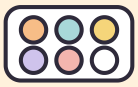
Road Trip Activities for Kids

These cards are for play at home. For the back seat, the plane and the wait before the food arrives, the full 37-page pack has quiet games for ages 3 to 8 that need nothing but crayons, with no small pieces to drop under the seat.



For the car

6 car bingo boards (including a colors and shapes board for ages 3 to 5 and a word board for readers), a color-a-stop trip map, a 40-car countdown, I spy, a road trip tally and the license plate game.



For the restaurant table

10 placemats with mazes, word searches, tic-tac-toe, dots and boxes, a kid food critic card and a design-your-own restaurant page, plus an answer key for grown-ups.



For the plane and after dark

An airport and airplane I spy page, a flight day checklist, 12 talking games that need no paper, 8 drawing prompts and a trip diary keepsake page.

Also inside: age tweaks for 3 to 4, 5 to 6 and 7 to 8, a simple safety page (the driver never plays, everyone stays buckled), and US Letter, A4 and low-ink PDFs.

See the pack at puddlesandplay.com

New ideas before each holiday

You're on the Puddles & Play email list, so new activity ideas and free printables will land in your inbox ahead of each holiday and school break. You can unsubscribe any time.

Say hello

Spotted a typo, or have a favorite activity to share? Email **hello@puddlesandplay.com**.

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