



## **PLAY IDEAS TO KEEP TODDLERS BUSY!**

By Judy Arnall

What to do when your toddler or preschooler is bored, that doesn't cost a lot of time, money, set-up or clean-up? There are many exciting things you can do:

- Have an easy to reach craft box of odds and ends: ribbons, cards, paper, markers, scissors, glue or glue sticks, glitter, paint, rulers, cardboard pieces, etc so the kids can help themselves and create a craft that is unstructured and entirely of their own imagination.
- Assemble a box of dress up clothes and items for props. Check out finds from the dollar store and thrift shop for castoffs.
- Have a dirt pile in the backyard and run a hose through it. The neighbors will not like it, but the kids will have a blast. Send them home if they have to use your bathroom, though!
- Make an indoor sandbox with a baby sized swimming pool, and rice or puffed wheat or lentils as the sand.
- Let the kids ride bikes or scooters or ride-on toys in the basement.
- Make homemade playdough and let the kids press in different shapes and items such as rings, straws, etc.
- Fill the baby bathtub or bowl of soapy water in the bathtub and let them play. Add food colored ice cubes, spoons, and cups for pouring.
- Use a small stool as a play table in the bathtub and give them cups to pour from and in.
- Get a small rebounder to jump on. Or designate certain sofa cushions for jumping on and fort building.
- Give blankets or old sheets for fort building.
- Use jumping balls in the house to work off excess energy.

- Blow bubbles on the kitchen floor. Use the excess soap to clean floor after!
- In the bathtub with no water, put your child in the tub dressed only with old underwear, and add a bowl of chocolate pudding. Allow finger painting on the walls, tub and themselves. A wonderful, sensuous feeling and much easier clean-up than finger- painting. Just hose down the walls and the child with a little soap and the showerhead afterwards.
- For children past the tasting stage, put small amounts of shaving cream in a muffin tin and tint with food color. Allow finger painting on the tub walls.
- Spread the sheets out on the floor and have a picnic in the house.
- Play “I spy” or “Rock, paper, scissors,” when you are stuck waiting somewhere.
- Get a basic car track that you put together in a line. Then use pillows to make hills and valleys. See how far the cars will go.
- Get an old shower curtain and draw roads, houses, and streets on it with permanent marker. Kids will love their city to play cars and people on it.

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