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By Nicole Dean

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***Making Memories***

What childhood memories do you hold dear? For me, it was all the times "life happened".

The little things like playing outside, riding my bike with the wind in my hair, playing at the park, swimming in the lakes, giggling with friends. None of those moments cost a cent, yet they are some of my most treasured memories.

The ideas in this book are all simple things. You won't find anything earth-shattering, just a bunch of your old favorite ideas compiled in one place.

We hope you enjoy our little project and that it brings you many happy memories with your children.

Nicole

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## Nature

### Wildlife

- Feed the ducks, squirrels, turtles or fish near you.
- Build a birdfeeder with your child. Look through a Bird Guide and watch as the hungry little birds come and eat all the birdseed you offer.
- Sign up for horse-back riding lessons – or find a trail-riding service for a single-day event.
- Take a trip to the local zoo, petting zoo, aquarium wildlife sanctuary, or even the pet store.
- Hunt for fireflies, butterflies or other insects. Watch them up close and let them fly free.

### ***More Wildlife Resources***

[Get a FREE poster and FREE issue of Zoobooks magazine!](#)

[Lion King Activities for Kids](#)

[Madagascar the Movie Activities for Kids](#)

[Insect Crafts](#)

[Ocean Themed Crafts](#)

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## **Digging in the Dirt**

Plant flowers, fruit trees, herbs, or vegetables. Your child will learn science, responsibility and have fun! Plus, even finicky eaters will sometimes eat veggies that they grew!

Start a compost pile. They'll love seeing all the worms playing!

Send your child outside with a bucket and small shovel. Shoveling snow, sand, dirt or rocks -- it's all good fun. Add some water, and you can make mud pies.

Every child loves trying to dig to China! Dig as deep as you can and try to reach the center of the earth, exploring different types of rocks and earth as you go.

## ***More Gardening Resources***

[Flowers Crafts & Activities for Kids](#)

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## **Scavenger Hunt**

Give your child a list of clues and send him out to find them. Clues can be simple or very advanced.

### ***Scavenger Hunt List Ideas – Depending on Age and Location***

- Granite (or any type of rock – or just “rock” for little ones)
- Something with Seeds
- Pine Cone
- Piece of Litter
- Something that could be Recycled
- Feather
- Something an Animal Could Eat
- Something green (or insert any color)
- Specific Types of leaves (maple, oak, willow)
- The car keys that you lost. ;)

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### **Throw Rocks**

Go to a pond, creek, or lake and throw rocks. Try to skip them or aim for different targets. See what shape skips the best and which make the biggest splashes.

Then, throw other objects from nature – leaves, flowers, pieces of bark, even dead bugs. ;) It's a lesson in physics – and it's fun!

Bring the dog to the pond. That way you'll have someone to bring back the sticks you throw.

### ***More Resources***

[Learn How to Skip the Perfect Rock](#)

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## Art

### **Art Supplies**

Give your child some art supplies. She will be entertained for hours if given encouragement. Please supervise closely if you don't want your child to have a self-induced bad haircut or attach the dog to her artwork!

### ***Art Supplies to Keep Handy***

- Crayons
- Scissors
- Old toy catalogs or magazines
- Junk mail
- Glue
- Tape
- Toilet paper roll
- Fabric scraps
- Stickers
- Finger paints
- Markers
- Colored pencils
- Construction paper
- Rubber stamps
- Ribbon
- Wrapping Paper
- Leaves
- Paper bags
- Paper plates
- Foam
- Flowers in the yard
- Popsicle sticks
- Beans (dried, not canned) ;)

### ***More Resources***

[Super Cheap Craft Supplies](#)

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## **Photography**

Give your child a disposable camera or a digital camera and witness their creativity. They may surprise you!

### ***Photo Assignment Scavenger Hunt***

Send your child on a photo assignment to take different types of pictures.

- A picture so close that it's hard to tell what it is.
- A landscape shot
- A person unaware that you're taking the picture (Be a spy, not a bathroom spy)
- A person posing (Costumes and props can add fun)
- A natural item (flower, tree, etc.)
- A man-made item (car, house, mailbox, pencil)
- A photo taken from a unique perspective

Or at a barbeque or party, let your child be the photographer. Tell them the assignment is that they get a picture of everyone who attends.

### ***Photo Gallery***

Once all the pictures are printed, make a gallery display. Paperclips or clothespins are perfect for displaying the art work of your budding artist.

### ***More Resources***

[Photography Guide For Kids](#)

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## **Interpret Art**

Go to the library and find a great book about famous works of art.

( We recommend this one - [The Usborne Introduction to Modern Art](#))

With your children, look through the book and ask them which pieces they like and why. What was the artists' mood? What was the world like at that time in history?

Then, give your child the opportunity to recreate the art they saw in the book, using whatever materials they'd like -- chalk, paint, crayons, glue, etc.

Your children will surely surprise you with their creativity.

## ***More Resources***

[Usborne Book of Art Ideas](#)

## **Play-Doh and Clay**

Big kids can make a sculpture, food, or people.

Little kids make GREAT snakes and rocks out of play-doh! ;)

### ***Kool-Aid Play Dough Recipe***

Provided by Aunt B of [Story Soup Kids](#)

2- 1/2 cups flour  
1/2 cup salt  
2 pkg. unsweetened Kool-Aid  
2 cups boiling water  
3 tablespoons vegetable oil

Mix all dry ingredients together. Add water and oil and stir. Knead with hands when mixture is cool.

Store in air-tight container. This recipe lasts for several months.

### ***More Resources***

[Play-doh and Play-doh Toys](#)

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## **Outdoor Art Ideas**

### ***Sidewalk Chalk***

Lay on the sidewalk and take turns outlining each other. Decorate your flat selves.

### ***Paint with Water***

Paint the house with water ... or paint the car with soap! ;)

### ***Design a Sandcastle***

Your little architect can design a castle to make Camelot envious.

### ***Paint Using Nature***

Use a pinecone to paint, or an acorn. Who needs a brush when you have a flower to paint with?

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## Family Night

### Movie Night

Cozy up on the couch and start a family tradition of movie and popcorn.

### Card games

Introduce your child to all the classic games that you used to play:

- UNO
- Crazy 8
- Go Fish
- Old Maid
- Memory Match.

### Board Games

Teach your child all your favorite board games.

- Monopoly
- Clue
- Candy Land
- Chutes and Ladders
- Twister

### *More Resources*

#### [Board Games](#)

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## Pretend Play

### A Mom's Fascination with Face Painting

By JoAnne Westcott

As the mom of a three and a five year old, I've been to many school events, community festivals and charity functions where the face painting booth, no matter what else was going on, was the star attraction.

So I began to wonder, why is it that face painting booths are so popular?

- Attention - All children crave attention. Come to think of it, most adults do too. When a child is sitting in the chair, the face painter is completely focused on that child. You can just see how special that child feels at that moment.
- Creativity - Any kind of painting is an expression of creativity. When kids choose the design they wish to have painted on their face, they take command of their own creativity and self-expression.
- Individuality - Kids are expected to have the right toys...the right clothes. Generation after generation, youngsters are encouraged to conform to be socially accepted. Face Painting is one way to express individuality.
- Fun - Let's face it. Having your face painted is just plain fun. And is there any sweeter look than the quick glances that kids take of themselves in the mirror after a face painting session? That little smirk on their face is priceless!

Face painting seemed like an awesome way to entertain my kids on a rainy day. Face Painters make it look so easy. I thought, "I can do that."

I had so many questions, but not a clue where to start. I searched face painting on the internet and although I found some beautiful photos of full face creations, they didn't really help me much as a beginner. I simply wanted to learn how to paint a flower design on my daughter's cheek. I knew, however, that I could learn a lot from the artists who create those kind of masterpieces.

So that's exactly where I chose to begin. I wanted to watch a face painter in action, talk to them, ask questions, dissect their technique. That is a pretty difficult thing to do in the middle of a festival or birthday party, but not if you hire one to come to your house...which is exactly what I did.

Hiring a face painting professional could cost anywhere from \$50 to over \$200 an hour, depending on where you live. But the information you glean will be

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invaluable. Here are a few things I learned from my friend, the professional face painter:

- Do use the right paints. Don't use any paints that are not specifically designed for use on skin.
- Don't use cheap brushes. Spend at least \$3.00 apiece on a few brushes and they will last a long time.
- Don't try to be all things to all people. It isn't necessary to paint 100 perfect designs. A small collection of 10 or 20 simple designs will make you look like a hero to the children.
- Do practice as much as you can...on people or on paper. With practice comes speed.
- Don't be afraid of making a mistake. Children are very forgiving, as is the paint. It's easily 'erasable'.
- Don't be nervous about fidgety kids. Speak calmly and quietly and they'll usually stay still.
- Do have fun. Face painting is a therapeutic, creative outlet.
- Do share your newfound talent. Volunteer your services at events and before you know it, someone may offer to pay you!

JoAnne Westcott is the author of *Easy Face Painting: How You Can Get Professional Results Even If You've Never Picked Up A Paintbrush*. She is a work-at-home mom of two girls, ages 3 and 5, and resides with her husband in St. Louis, Missouri. You can learn more about face painting and how to acquire the simple skills to get started by visiting JoAnne's web site: [Easy Face Painting](#)



[Easy Face Painting:](#)  
How An Amateur Face Painter Can Get Professional Results ... Even If You've Never Picked Up A Paintbrush

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## **Charades**

Toddlers can act out and guess their favorite animals (usually with many sound effects). This can be hilarious watching a preschooler doing the exact same motions with different sounds when attempting charades. ;)

Older children will enjoy acting out their favorite movie titles, characters from books, figures from history, and more!

## ***More Resources***

[Charades](#)

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## **Dress Up**

Give your children your clothes and watch them imitate you.

Start with an old trunk and fill it with the following:

- old prom dresses
- big hats
- shirts and ties
- old Halloween costumes (or buy extra pieces after Halloween – on the clearance rack - for year-round fun!).

Bring out a box of costumes and watch the shows with your children as the stars.

Keep a camera handy to capture the fun. Also, keep an eye on the pets. Cats don't always appreciate wearing a sombrero. Trust me, I have the scars to prove it! ;)

## ***More Dress Up Fun***

[Dream Dazzlers: Fantasy Dress Up Trunk](#)

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## Character Game

Tell your child to pick a character from a book or movie that he's familiar with, and you do the same.

Then, ask several questions and you each write the answers to the questions on a piece of paper. When you've finished asking the questions, then have your child read the answers and try to guess who he was pretending to be. You do the same and see if your child can guess who you were.

Whether you are pretending to be Peter Pan or Shrek, you and your child will have fun and your child won't even realize he's practicing his writing!

## 20 Questions

Do you remember 20 Questions? One person thinks of a person, place or thing, and then everyone takes turns asking that person "yes" or "no" questions to try to figure out who or what he is.

For instance, I am thinking of something.

You could ask:

- "Are you alive?"
- "Are you man-made?"
- "Are you smaller than a child?"

And it goes from there...

A few ideas from our last road trip:

- Fire
- A cob of corn
- Shrek
- Steering Wheel
- Scuba Mask

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## **Felt Boards**

Children love to tell stories with felt. You'll need a felt board to start. You can make your own board from a sheet of felt or purchase a board.

Once you have the board, let the fun begin. Go to a craft or fabric store and buy sheets of felt in all colors. Then, cut out shapes in all colors and sizes. (You'll be amazed at how quickly a child will make an alien, ship, house, or person out of nothing but a few circles, rectangles, and triangles.)

## ***More Resources***

[Felt Supplies](#)

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## **Build a Pretend World**

### ***Cardboard Boxes***

Make towers, build cities, design play houses, airplanes, trains, forts and more!

### ***Blocks and Legos***

Children can play for hours building towers, bridges, cities, creatures, and more with these toys that inspire creativity, patience, and small-motor skills.

When the masterpiece is finished, have your child pretend to be a giant and smash through the blocks -- or grab a few small cars and drive around the new city!

Be sure to name the city and have your child tell you all about it. Ask questions.

"Where does the mean kid with the pigeon live?"

"Where's the barber shop?"

### ***More Resources***

[Lego Store](#)

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## **Doll-houses**

There is nothing more fun than watching your child make up stories as the family members move around in a doll house.

Plus, if you have a wooden dollhouse, there is the added benefit of decorating the dollhouse with some wallpaper scraps and carpet remnants! Your dollhouse could be a family heirloom if you put enough love into it.

### ***More Resources***

[Doll Houses](#)

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### **Play Office (or Post Office)**

Give your child Junk Mail, stickers, a calculator and pen -- they'll have their own office!

- Calculator
- Stickers can be pretend stamps
- Pens and Pencils
- Envelopes
- Old (cancelled) stamps
- Those sheets of stickers you get in sweepstakes mailings (to order magazines).

### ***Pay the Bills***

If you've recently switched banks and have checks that need to be destroyed, first let your child play with them. Give him some envelopes and he can pretend to pay bills -- while getting him to do some writing. Of course, destroy the checks afterwards.

If you do not have checks available, you can just give your child some blank pieces of paper and he can make his own checks.

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## **More Ideas for Pretend Play**

### ***Puppets***

Make puppets out of socks, paper bags, felt, cloth, or popsicle sticks. Make a stage and tell stories. Get out the video camera and capture your child's brilliance.

### [Puppets](#)

### ***Bath Time***

Bath time is a great time for kids.

Bring kitchen utensils into the bath tub. Bubbles and water can become an imaginary gourmet dinner.

Color your bubbles with colored soap or Tub Tints.

Put a few drops of food coloring into your ice cube tray when you're making ice. Then, drop the colored ice cubes into the bath tub.

### [Bath Toys](#)

### ***Shadow Puppets***

Do you remember all the fun shadow puppets you used to know?

### [Learn How to make Flashlight Animals](#)

### ***Tea Party***

Grab the stuffed animals and treat them to a delicious cup of imaginary tea.

### [Tea Party Sets](#)

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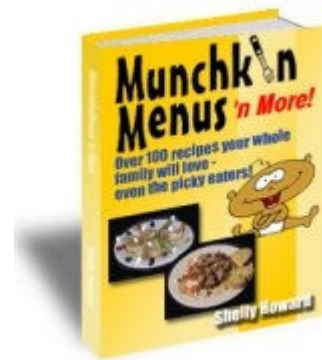
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## Kitchen Fun

### Age-Appropriate Activities Your Children Can Do

by Shelly Howard, of [MunchkinMenus.com](http://MunchkinMenus.com)



[Kids in the Kitchen – Age Appropriate Activities Kids Can Do](#) – Ages 1-10. All Kids can Help in the kitchen!

***Check out Shelly's Book***

[Stop Wasting Money at McDonalds! Instead, cook quick easy meals your Munchkins will Love.](#)

Are you a Work at Home Mom? If so, here's a freebie for you -

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### **Imagination Kitchen – What’s for Dinner?**

Kids love to play Kitchen, whether it is mixing air, or getting to play with food. Give your child a great time by giving them safe kitchen utensils to play with in a bin of water. Mixing, pouring, and scooping bubbles and water entertains my children long enough for them to look pruny.

Give them puffed rice cereal and some bowls and utensils on the kitchen floor. Just plan to vacuum afterwards as there'll be quite a wonderful mess!

Or how about a [play-doh](#) pie?

### ***More Resources***

[Kitchen Sets](#)

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## **More Kitchen Fun**

### ***Have a Picnic***

Make some sandwiches and eat them outside.

### ***Treats***

Make cookies and decorate them.

Whether you start with cookie cutters or just decorate the big round cookies, you'll have a sweet time together!

### ***More Resources***

[Cookie Cutters](#)

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## Move our Bodies

### Bubbles

Blow Bubbles. Take turns chasing and popping them. This is a great physical activity, as children will chase bubbles all day!

### *Need a Bubble recipe to make your own Giant Bubbles?*

Here's one provided by Aunt B of [Story Soup Kids](#)

1 cup liquid detergent (or no-tears baby shampoo)

1 cup glycerin (or corn syrup)

3 cups water

Food coloring (optional)

Round bubble blower made of thin wire (6-8 inches in diameter)

Mix all ingredient together. May add food coloring for colored bubbles.

To make bubble blower, bend a wire clothes hanger into a circle. To form the handle, twist the hook opposite the circle. Wrap the handle with electrical tape or yarn. For bigger bubbles, wrap the circle with cotton twine. This will help absorb more soap mixture. The rounder the circle, the better it works. Florist wire can be used to make smaller wands with different shapes.

### *More Resources*

### [Bubbles](#)

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More Fun Ways to Move our Bodies

### **Water Games**

- Run through the sprinkler.
- Water Balloons
- Squirt Toys

### Water Toys

#### **Tag**

How many versions of tag do you remember from your childhood?

- Freeze Tag
- TV Tag
- Flashlight Tag

Teach the oldies to your children.

#### **Hide and Seek**

Little ones will make you giggle to play hide and seek with them. My kids would hide in the same place over and over again. 😊

Enjoy this classic game.

#### **Play Catch**

Throw different items (balloons, tennis balls) to your child.

Roll balls to young children.

### Baseball Supplies

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## Building Character

### **Abundance**

Every day, have your children tell you what they are thankful for.

### **Volunteer to Make the World a Better Place**

Make it a habit to help to make the world a better place, both with your children and through your example.

### ***Some ideas:***

- Jump Rope for Heart
- Pick up Litter around the neighborhood
- Save your Pennies for Charity
- Offer to help an elderly neighbor

### ***More Resources***

[Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy](#)

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## Music

### **Musical Instruments**

Whether your musical instruments are home-made with a comb and wax paper or store bought, making music is a wonderful way to spend the day.

Teach your child that music can be made from anything, from an old oatmeal container, to scratching two pieces of sandpaper together.

Go on a walk and just listen to the sounds of the world -- music is everywhere in our lives.

### ***More Resources***

#### [Musical Instruments](#)

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**Sing to the 70s, 80s, and 90s!**

Turn up the radio and sing! Teach your child the music of the 70s, 80s, or 90s.

***More Resources***

[70s Music](#)

[80s Music](#)

[90s Music](#)

**Types of Music**

Introduce your children to new styles of music on a regular basis -- Classical, Reggae, Folk Music, Jazz, Blues, Opera, Soundtracks from Musicals. Not only will it stimulate their minds, but it's a lot of fun!

***More Resources***

[Jazz](#)

[Broadway](#)

[Blues](#)

[Childrens Songs in Spanish - Classics, Rhymes and more Click here](#)

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[www.showmomthemoney.com/free-tutorial.htm](http://www.showmomthemoney.com/free-tutorial.htm)

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## Encouraging Your Child to Write

How in the world do you get your child to write? This is the battle cry of many parents. A lot of imagination, with a little bribery (or praise) is all you need to get your child writing. We'll supply the imagination. The praise and bribery is all up to you.

These ideas can be adapted for preschool age kids through elementary school.

Whether your child is scribbling wiggle worm words or writing advanced essays, praise their accomplishments.

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## **Journal**

Present a notebook or diary to your child and encourage them to express their feelings with pictures and words.

### ***Fictional Journal***

Sometimes it is hard for children to write in a journal. What is there to write about? Instead of a standard journal, give your child a fictional journal.

He or she can pretend to be anything they'd like to be and write a journal as that person.

Your child could write from the perspective of

- Astronaut discovering a new planet
- Prince or Princess on an Adventure
- Archaeologist finding a new species of Dinosaur
- Famous Athlete
- President of a Country
- Passenger on the Titanic.

Or our child could write from the perspective something instead of someone

- a mailbox
- an animal
- a pen.

The possibilities are endless.

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## **Grocery List**

Enlist your child's help in making the grocery list. Walk around the kitchen, naming things you need from the store. Ask your child to write everything down. Your child can also suggest foods you might need from the store and he can add those, too.

Go through cookbooks and let your child choose recipes to make. As they choose recipes, have them write the cookbook name, the page, recipe and the ingredients you'll need. Then head off to the store together and come home for some home-cookin'!

## ***More Resources***

[Kids CookBooks](#)

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## **Cards**

If your child is interested in Pokemon or Yu-Gi-Oh cards, then give him some index cards cut in half and have him design his own cards.

Encourage your child to give the characters names and special abilities on their cards.

### ***More Resources***

[Pokemon Cards](#)

[How to Draw Anime](#)

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## Alphabet Game

Take a piece of paper and write the letters A-Z in the left column. Then, choose a category from the following or make up one of your own.

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Animals
- Musical Instruments

For older children, the categories can be narrower and more difficult, like

- Countries
- Characters in Literature
- Presidents
- States

Set a timer and you and your child both list as many of the items in the category as you can for each letter.

The trick at the end is that you have to cross off anything on your list that your child has listed. (for instance, if you both have "apple" for an "a" fruit, then the parent crosses theirs off.)

Whoever has the most words wins.

## **More Writing Ideas**

### ***Letter-writing***

Have your child write a letter to Santa, the Easter bunny, or the Tooth Fairy. Or, your child could write to their favorite athlete, fictional character, or movie star.

### ***Keep in Touch***

Write a letter to Grandparents, Aunts or Uncles. Teach the importance of family.

And, keep on those kids to get their thank you notes done. It teaches manners, appreciation, as well as reading and writing skills!

### ***Write a Story***

Do your children have a favorite series of books, like The Magic Tree House or Harry Potter? They can write the next book in the series! Brainstorm the plot with your children. Provide them with a special notebook for writing the story -- and let their imagination take them on a journey. A chapter each week will really add up!

Younger kids can write wiggle-worm sentences (much scribbling and pictures).

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## World Cultures

### Languages

Expose your children to other languages.

[Spanish Educational Toys Click Here](#)

### Cultural Music

Introduce your children to new styles of music on a regular basis -- Classical, Reggae, Jazz, Blues, Opera, Soundtracks from Musicals, Classic Rock, Popular Music from the 60's-90's, Music from all over the World. Not only will it stimulate their minds, but it's a lot of fun!

[Childrens Songs in Spanish - Classics, Rhymes and more Click here](#)

### Awesome Food!

Introduce your children to new styles of food. Mexican, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Indian. There are so many wonderful dishes that you can find in a restaurant or cook them at home with the help of this simple cookbook for Children → [World Cookbook](#)

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## Traditions

### Daily, Weekly or Monthly Themes

Establish daily or monthly themes for your family.

Big kids can have more advanced themes:

- A state each week
- Jerry Lewis Movie of the Week

Little kids can do more simple themes:

- Letter of the Day
- Color of the Week

### ***More Resources***

[Free Gifts worth over \\$25 from Brighter Vision](#) (monthly themes for kids 1-6 years old)

### **Holiday Themes**

Remember how much you had creating Holiday art projects? Nothing brings out the kid in you better than sharing some together time with your own children and there's no better time to do it than during the holiday season! Start the season with some cute and fun to make Holiday crafts that your kids will love.

### ***More Resources***

[www.makeholidaysfun.com/](http://www.makeholidaysfun.com/)

Are you a Work at Home Mom? If so, here's a freebie for you -  
[www.showmomthemoney.com/free-tutorial.htm](http://www.showmomthemoney.com/free-tutorial.htm)

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## Reading

Enroll your children in your local library's summer reading program every year. These reading programs reward children for reading during the summer months, and are usually free to join.

If your library doesn't offer a summer reading program, contact your local bookstore.

Or make your own reading contest. Simply draw a chart with rewards at different levels. Every time your children reach a new level on the chart, celebrate their accomplishments!

### ***More Resources***

[Click here!](#) Hooked on Phonics Learn to Read

[Personalized Children's Books](#)

Are you a Work at Home Mom? If so, here's a freebie for you -

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## **Shopping for Old-fashioned Toys to Inspire Children**

Walk through any toy store and you will see walls and walls of toys that are loud - - toys that require batteries, have flashing lights, or that look like your child's favorite movie character. But, what about those of us who want to raise children with imagination and curiosity? I'll tell you what we do. We choose to fill our houses with some of the following old-fashioned items.

### ***Blocks and Legos***

[Lego Store](#)

### ***Art Supplies***

[Super Cheap Craft Supplies](#)

### ***Musical Instruments***

[Musical Instruments](#)

### ***Dress-up Clothes***

[Dream Dazzlers: Fantasy Dress Up Trunk](#)

### ***Play-Doh and Clay***

[Play-doh and Play-doh Toys](#)

### ***Doll-houses***

[Doll Houses](#)

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## Free Resources Just For Moms

[www.showmomthemoney.com](http://www.showmomthemoney.com)

Be a Successful Work at Home Mom!

[www.homeorganizationhelp.com](http://www.homeorganizationhelp.com)

Help! I Need Home Organization Ideas!

[www.freequickrecipes.com](http://www.freequickrecipes.com)

Free Online Recipes for Mothers ... & Others

[www.romanceyourhusband.com](http://www.romanceyourhusband.com)

Romance Your Husband Today!

[www.funexercisevideos.com](http://www.funexercisevideos.com)

Trim those thighs Today!

[www.showmomthemoney.com/funandfree.asp](http://www.showmomthemoney.com/funandfree.asp)

Free Online Surveys for Cash

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