

play 4 life

indoor play

Discover a new
playground without
leaving home



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playing indoors

The great thing about playing indoors is that you can do it whenever you want, especially when the weather's not good or it's dark outside.

Your home can make an exciting place to play, where children can stay happily occupied, using their imagination and learning to play together. What's more, once they've finished, tidying-up can be part of the whole learning experience!

Play doesn't have to involve paid-for equipment to be fun. Most of the time, all you need are a few everyday household items, things you can pick up for free, or just your imagination.

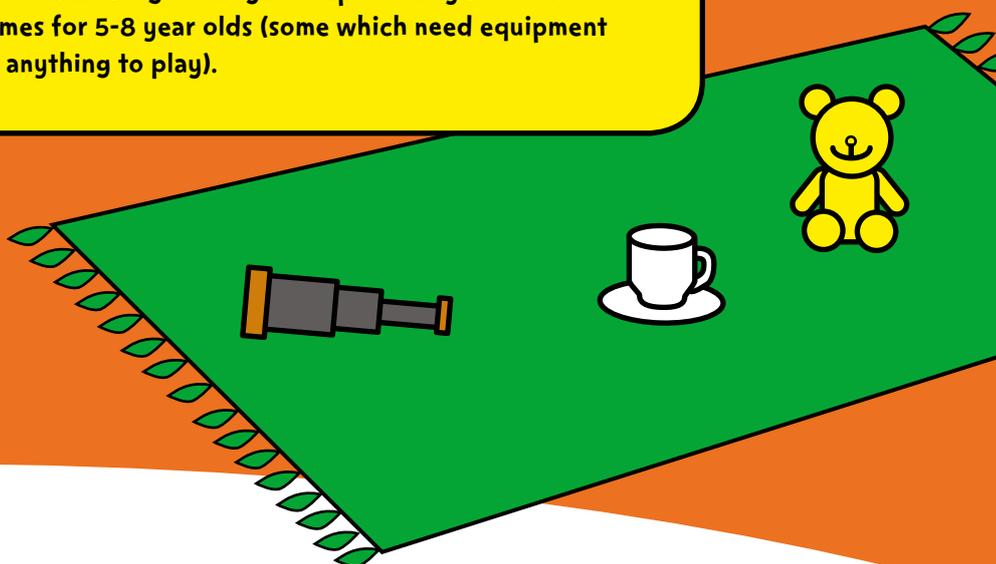
So, are you ready for play-time?

Great ideas to get you started

It doesn't take much to spark a child's imagination – given the time and space, children will have plenty of fun playing. The best role for you as an adult is to support them do this, or often just let them get on with it! Using their own imagination is the best way to play.

In the right environment, children at play will tend to be as active as they need to be. You can leave them to it – unless you want to join in the fun yourself!

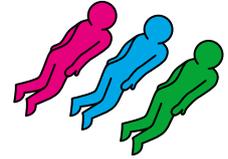
If you do want to join in be careful not to take over. Remember, this is their play-time! Here are some great ideas to get them off to a flying start. We have grouped the games into convenient categories – games specifically for toddlers and preschool kids, and games for 5-8 year olds (some which need equipment and others that don't need anything to play).



toddlers and preschool kids

Wiggly worms

Ask the kids to lie on the floor on their tummies with their hands by their sides, and see how far they can wiggle around the home.



Penguin Shuffle

Equipment needed - a small beanbag

Players stand side by side with their 'eggs' (small objects, like beanbags) balanced on top of their feet.

The first one to shuffle across the room without dropping their eggs wins.



Hop about!

One player is the 'hop master' while all the others have three lives. The hop master picks a magic word, and every time they say it, all players must hop three times on the spot.

Each time they miss it, they lose a life. When all their lives are gone they're out of the game.



Tea Party

Equipment needed - plastic cups, saucers, plates and some cuddly toys

If you don't have a toy tea set, then an old one will do, as long as it's not your finest china! Get all the dolls and teddies involved to sit in on the imaginary tea party.

You can even add in some dressing up to make the party even more fun!



toddlers and preschool kids

Musical Statues

Equipment needed – music player

Pick a games master who is in charge of the music. He or she plays the music while everyone else dances around the room. When the music stops, everyone must freeze like a statue. The last person to stand completely still is out, and anyone moving when the music is not playing is also out.

The game continues until the person left at the end is the winner.

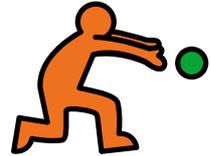


Catch Don't Catch

Equipment needed – ball or small beanbag

Players stand in a circle with their arms crossed. One person in the centre throws the ball to someone in the circle, saying either 'Catch' or 'Don't catch'.

If they say 'Catch', the player should not catch the ball and must not move their arms. If they say 'Don't catch', the player should catch the ball. If a player does the wrong thing or misses the ball, they're out!



Hot Potato

Equipment needed – ball or small beanbag

All players stand in a circle and one person stands with his or her back to the circle and does not watch where the 'potato' is. Everyone passes a ball or small beanbag (or anything else for that matter) from person to person. When the player with his or her back to the circle shouts 'stop', the person holding the potato is out.

The game continues until the person left at the end is the winner.



Boxes and Dens

Equipment needed – a table kids can crawl under, a blanket, old cardboard boxes

Next time you get something big delivered, keep the cardboard box: it'll make a great car, boat or plane, or even a doll's house.

Or you could get them to build a den. Throwing a blanket or duvet over a table is a great start! Then just add imagination. You could even put up a small tent to get them going.



5-8 year olds

These games are really easy to play and they don't even need any equipment!

Simon Says

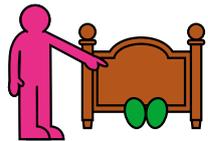
Choose one person to call out actions to the rest of the group. Whenever they say "Simon says", everyone must do the action. For example, if they hear "Simon says jump up and down", everyone must jump up and down.

If the caller doesn't start by saying "Simon says", nobody should do the actions - and if they do, they're out!



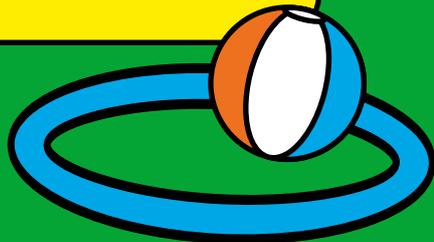
Hide and Seek

There are all sorts of hide and seek games the children can play in the home. They can hide themselves, or even hide different objects like teddies around the home and say 'warmer' or 'colder' as the other person gets nearer or further away from them!



Junior Masterchef

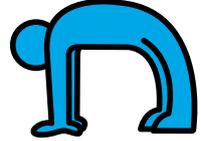
Kids love being in the kitchen, so let them help you make lunch or dinner. Better still, let them design and create some healthy snacks of their own to enjoy later in the day. To give them some ideas have a look at www.kidsandcooking.co.uk



5-8 year olds

Charades

One player has to mime the name of a film, cartoon character, TV show, song or animal. Whoever guesses the right answer gets the next go. You can play in teams or as individuals.



Talent Show

This is a great way to get the imagination working.

Get them to perform a well-known song or dance, or better still make one up! Or you could choose one of their favourite TV programmes and then get them to create their own episode. (Their versions are often better than the real thing!)



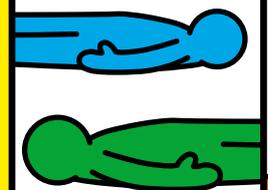
Sleeping Lions

This game is great for larger groups.

Everyone lies on the floor except one or two hunters. Everyone else is a 'sleeping lion', and once they've settled they're not allowed to move.

The hunters walk around trying to make the sleeping lions move by making them laugh, telling jokes and so on, but they aren't allowed to touch them. Once a lion has moved, it gets up to join the hunters.

The last lion left on the floor is the winner.



5-8 year olds

These next activities mostly just need a couple of items to play, and they're all things you might be able to find around the house or pick up cheaply.

Hunt the Button

Equipment needed - a button or other small item

Everyone leaves the room except one person, who must place the button (or a similar small object) somewhere unexpected, but in plain sight. The other players come in and search for it.

When a player sees the button, he or she must sit down without giving away its location. The last one left standing loses the game. (This is a great game for even very young children, but start by placing it somewhere obvious for a few rounds to avoid frustration!)



Marbles

Equipment needed - a bag of marbles

Divide up the marbles evenly between 2 players.

Player 1 rolls the marble across the floor. Player 2 tries to hit player 1's marble. Take it in turns until a player hits the marble, then that marble is theirs.

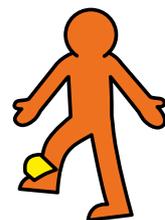
Once they get the hang of it, they can make up their own marble games.



Footbag

Equipment needed - a small beanbag

Beanbags are great for indoors as they are soft. Get the kids to stand in a circle and play catch with it - but they have to use their feet! Beanbags can be used in several other of the games in this guide - you could even make your own using material from an old t-shirt, filling it with uncooked rice then sewing it together.



5-8 year olds

Balloon Games

Equipment needed - a pack of balloons

Balloons are a sure way to get the kids excited! It's best if an adult blows them up. Then why not have a competition to see who can keep a balloon in the air the longest?

Once they become experts, tell them they can only use their heads and feet!



Bottle Bowling

Equipment needed - ten drinks bottles

Collect ten empty plastic drinks bottles and half-fill them with water. Then set them in a V shape: 4 at the back, 3 in the next row, 2 in the next row and 1 in front.

Find a ball to play with and you're off! Each player gets two goes. If they knock down all ten down at once, they get 10 points and set all 10 bottles up again for their second go.

Keep score and see who has the most after 10 rounds.

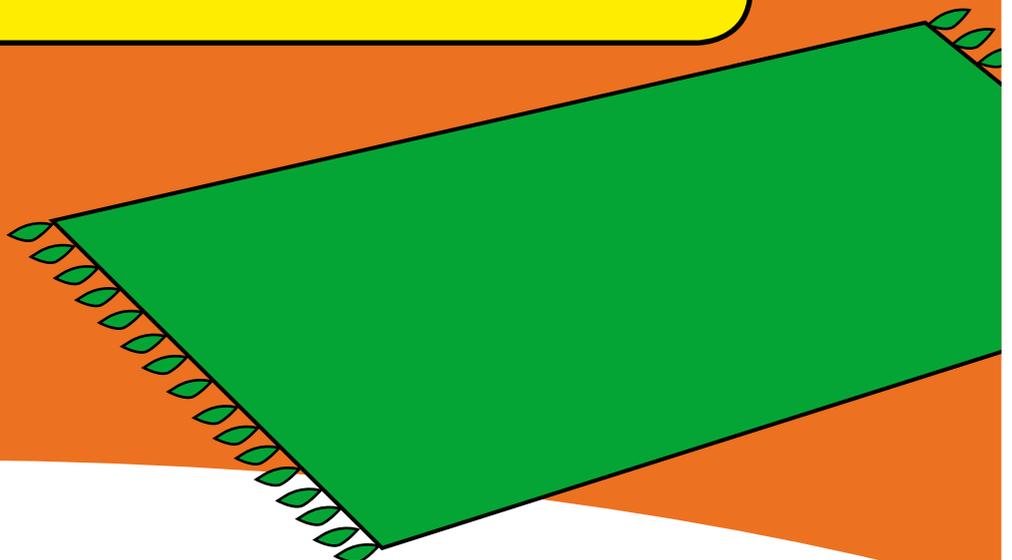


Marble Run

Equipment needed - a few marbles, some toys, cardboard tubes, sticky tape

Create a 'marble run' from the toys and equipment, things like play blocks, cardboard, paper, kitchen roll holders and tape - they could even make a see-saw!

Then see how far they can get a marble to roll. The one who gets the furthest wins.



5-8 year olds

Rock the House!

Equipment needed – pots, pans, wooden spoons, other small instruments

You don't need expensive instruments (or computer games) to make great music! If you can bear the noise, let the kids make a drum kit from pots and pans, percussion instruments from your cutlery drawer and add a harmonica, kazoos, recorders and whistles to create a truly unforgettable sound!

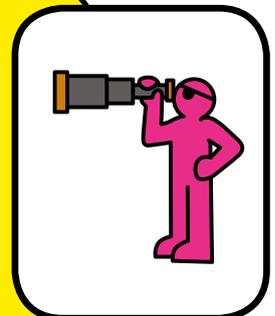


Dressing Up

Equipment needed – some old clothes like hats, shoes, shirts and scarves

Save some old clothes that you don't wear anymore and keep them in a box or bag at the back of your wardrobe. They make perfect clothes for kids to dress up in, and you'll be amazed at how good they can make your old stuff look with a big dose of imagination!

Why not create a catwalk for them to put on their own fashion show?

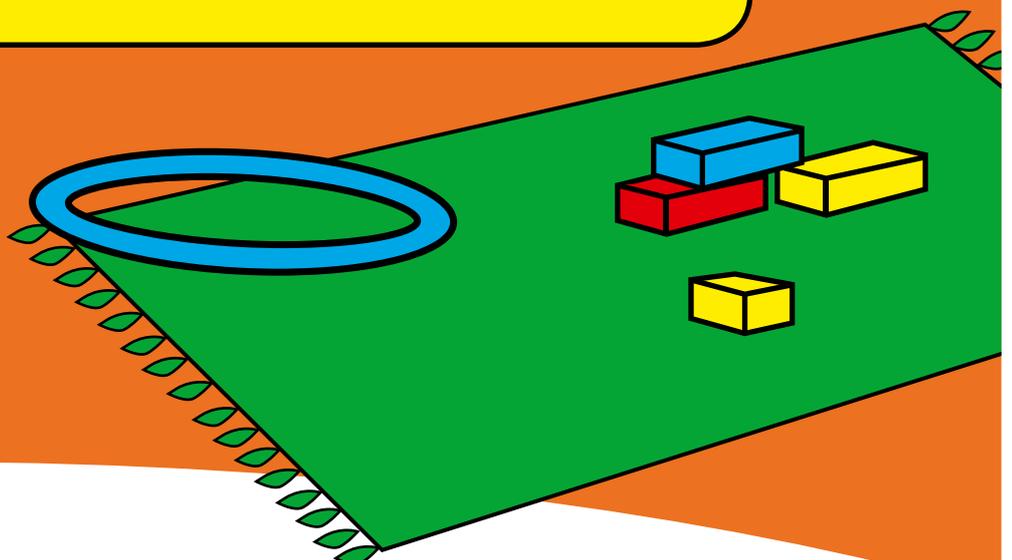


Shark-Infested Carpet

Equipment needed – some cushions, chairs and/or a sofa

Create an obstacle course of cushions, sofas and chairs for the kids to climb around. The only rule: they can't touch the floor or they'll be eaten by the sharks!

Once they can get around, add to the challenge by making them carry things without dropping them: a big cushion or a bag, or get them to balance an object on their heads!



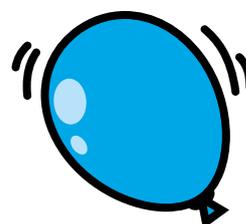
Play for all families

At Change4Life, we believe that all children should be encouraged to play. Some of the games outlined in this guide won't be suitable or practical for all families, but many of them can be adapted for your own individual family, including children or parents with disabilities.

Parents can get more ideas for play geared towards disabled children or families by downloading the following documents from the 'Contact a Family' website:

www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/holidays.pdf

www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/westmids/WM061.pdf

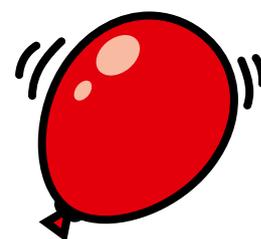


Playful parenting: top tips

When playing with children it's less about what you do and more about the way you do it. Here are some handy 'dos and don'ts' to get you thinking about ways to play with your kids indoors:

1. **Do** give them the chance to choose what games to play and how they play them. Forcing them to do something doesn't make play-time much fun!
2. **Don't** solve every task for kids – encourage them to solve the problem themselves.
3. **Do** remember kids are all different: some like energetic play, some love word games, some are born to perform and some can't stop making things – and destroying them! Think about the kinds of activities your child likes and let them take the lead.
4. **Don't** be a competitive mum or dad. Learning how to lose is an important social skill for a child, but try to keep games enjoyable and let them win too – sometimes!
5. **Don't** be afraid to join in with make-believe games. Kids love it when parents play-act and it lets their imaginations run wild.
6. **Do** let kids teach you how to play with their toys – they will take great pleasure in the role reversal and telling you what they know.
7. **Do** share a game you used to play as a child. Think of the things you most enjoyed, the chances are your kids will enjoy them just as much!
8. **Do** enjoy playing. If your child is having fun but you aren't, just leave them to it. If they're not having fun, suggest something else.

This and more information about play can be found at www.playday.org.uk



play safe in the home

If you don't want to give the children the run of the whole house, allocate a play-area for them to use for their games.

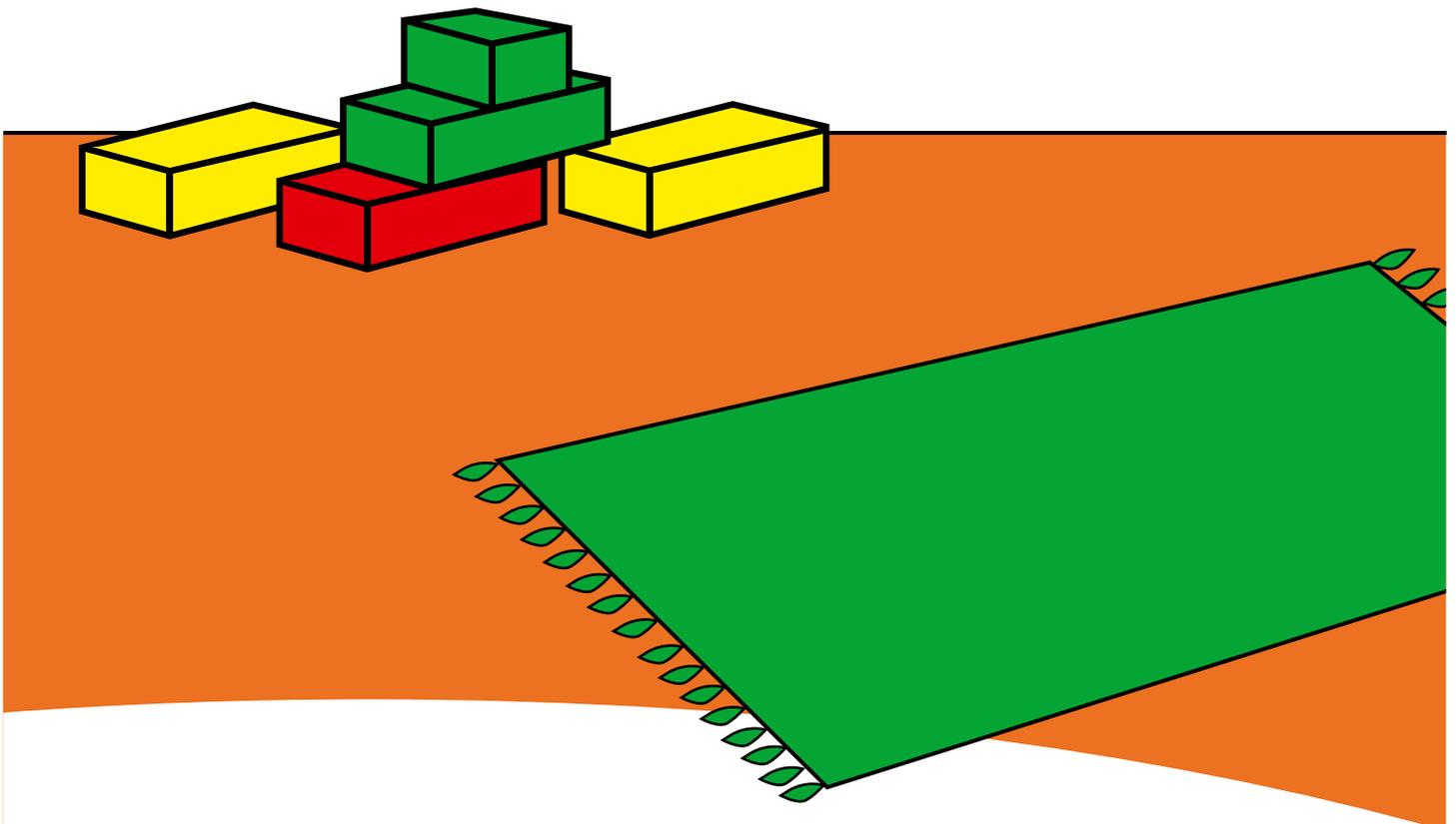
Here are some things you can do to make the room safe before letting them loose inside:

- Remove all sharp objects, including furniture with sharp edges or hard corners, or put covers over them.
- Take out all valuables and breakables.
- Make sure any areas of plate-glass are cordoned off.
- Use chairs to make a simple barrier.
- Make sure there is no furniture near windows that children could climb up onto and fall out of.
- Get down to a child's level (all fours) to see what children see and notice any hazards.

It pays to spend a bit of time preparing the room for play. Even moving the furniture around can get the children excited and spark their imaginations.

A properly prepared room means you can leave them to play happily without constant supervision, giving you a well-earned break.

When children are in the kitchen or playing with certain toys, such as marbles, they should be supervised. Toys that could cause accidents should put be away afterwards and this can be built into play-time as another game to finish on.



Sources for more ideas

Here are some great websites where you can find a whole world of ideas for great indoor games:

www.familyfun.go.com

www.funandgames.org

www.playday.org.uk

www.playgroundfun.org.uk

