

Ask the Pediatrician: What are some no-cost, screen-free activities to play with my preschooler?

September 25 2023, by Suanne Kowal-Connelly



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Most parents want to provide more for their children than their parents were able to do for them. But have you ever noticed how kids tend to

have fun with things as simple as a cardboard box?

When it comes to play, which is essential to [healthy development](#), simple toys such as blocks, balls, jump-ropes and buckets are often the best kind for kids. In fact, they're more effective in allowing [children](#) to be imaginative and creative than more expensive toys that may be out of reach for many parents.

So why not take that cardboard box and play with them? More than any material gift, YOU are the best toy your child will ever receive.

While it may be hard to relax and give yourself over to play, view this time with your child as an adventure. You are not only promoting the many benefits of play, but also getting to know your child better and strengthening the parent-child bond. For starters, your role can actually be quite minimal and the play you undertake can be almost any activity.

Here are a dozen old-school play ideas your preschooler will adore.

1. Duck, [duck](#), goose: Everyone sits in a circle. One child is "it" and goes around the circle tapping everyone on the head while saying, "Duck." At the child's discretion, they tap someone and call out "Goose."

At that moment, the child tapped must jump up and chase the child who was "it" around the circle of kids. If the child who was "it" makes it around the circle and sits down, then they are "safe." If tagged by the "goose," then they are out. Either way, the goose is now "it" and the game resumes. Eventually, only two children are left. The last child left without being tagged wins.

2. London Bridge is falling down: Two children form a bridge by joining hands across from each other. As everyone sings the nursery rhyme, all the children pass under the upstretched arms. When the song ends, the

arms are dropped around the child passing through at the time. Then the song changes to, "Take the key and lock her up." Those joining hands can start rocking arms back and forth. Preschoolers delight in being "locked up" and swayed to and fro.

3. Limbo: Bring a broomstick outside and ask two [older children](#) or adults hold the ends. Have the children go under the stick without touching it. If the stick is touched, that child is out. After everyone has had a turn, the stick can be gradually lowered in increments. This can be done to music, too, if available.

4. Egg races: Make some hard-boiled eggs and bring them outside with some tablespoons. Have fun telling your preschooler where they have to walk, run, jump, etc., while balancing the egg on the spoon. This promotes balance and dexterity.

5. Simon says, This is one of the most popular games for young children to play. It encourages good listening skills and focus. You are Simon. Stand facing your children and give orders, such as "Simon says to touch your nose" or "Simon says to do a jumping jack." As you call out each order, the children must do whatever you do, as long as you have said, "Simon says." If you just say, "Do this," whoever follows the action that you now do is out. The last child standing wins.

6. Head, shoulders, knees and toes: You sing the tune and control the pace. Children have to touch the body part being mentioned, as it is mentioned. You can speed up the pace of the tune, and your child has to move faster and faster to keep up. It can get pretty funny as everyone tries to touch their knees and toes as fast as possible.

7. Nature walks: You can turn literally any walk outside into a nature walk—even a walk around the block. Observe the weather, animals, bugs and plants. You might say, "Look at those big clouds," or "Touch this

grass. It is still wet from yesterday's rain." Preschoolers especially love exploring and are sure to have plenty of questions for you along the way!

8. Follow the leader: Move all around doing different movements. Everyone has to do what you do. Simple. Great. Fun!

9. Tag: You can be "it" for starters. Everyone tries to catch you and tag you. If a child tags you, that child gets to be "it." Some designated spots can be considered "safe," like all the trees, park benches, etc. This is a great excuse to just run around!

10. Run around: You can be "it" and call out things for everyone to do. For example, "Run from this tree to that tree," or "Hop on one foot from this bench to that tree." There are endless suggestions—you will probably run out of ideas before your preschooler gets bored!

While you may find many opportunities to capitalize on "teachable moments" during these activities, the key is to do what comes naturally to you as a parent. Playing together shouldn't be a chore or something you feel pressure to do. Enjoy the time you spend with your [child](#). It will pass all too soon!

2023 Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Ask the Pediatrician: What are some no-cost, screen-free activities to play with my preschooler? (2023, September 25) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-09-pediatrician-no-cost-screen-free-play-preschooler.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--