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FREE RESOURCE

The Screen-Free Weekend Playbook

20 structured creative experiences for the weekends when the screen has to wait.

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The screen conversation nobody is having honestly

The average Australian child aged 2 to 5 spends over two hours on screens every day. By the time they start school, many have never experienced extended boredom. And boredom, it turns out, is where creativity lives.

2.5hrs

Average daily screen time for Australian children under 5. Double the recommended limit.

18min

Average time before a screen-removed child finds their own meaningful play, if you let the discomfort land.

3x

Children with regular unstructured creative play develop problem-solving skills at three times the rate of high screen-time peers.

"Boredom is not a problem to be solved. It is a developmental superpower to be protected."

Valando Demetriou, Co-Founder, Mini Ivy Art Studio

This guide is not anti-screen. It is pro-boredom. Pro-mess. Pro-your-child-figuring-it-out. The 20 activities here are designed for real life: no specialist supplies, no complicated setup, no pressure to be Pinterest-worthy.

What to do when they say 'I'm bored'

The hardest part of a screen-free morning is not the lack of ideas. It is the first fifteen minutes. Here is your exact playbook for navigating it without a meltdown, yours or theirs.

Stage 1

Announce it calmly. Not as a punishment.

"We are having a screen-free morning today. That means we get to do something else. Let's see what we come up with." Framing matters. If you treat it like a removal, they will resist it like a removal.

Stage 2

Let the boredom land. Do not immediately fill it.

The discomfort of "I'm bored" typically lasts 8 to 18 minutes before a child's brain generates its own solution. Your job is to resist filling that gap. Be present. Do not rescue.

Stage 3

Offer a starting point, not a full directed activity.

"Here are some paper and textas, see what happens" is more powerful than "let's do a craft project." Open invitations let the child lead. Directed activities require you to manage them.

Stage 4

Step back once they are engaged.

Resist the urge to stay and direct. Once a child is absorbed, your presence can interrupt their flow. The goal is independent, self-sustaining engagement. Let them be.

SCRIPT FOR "THIS IS BORING / I HATE THIS"

"I know it feels uncomfortable. That feeling is your brain getting ready to have a really good idea. Let's see what it comes up with."

Screen-free ideas that actually work, Ages 2 to 5

01

Texture Painting

Paint with sponges, forks, fingers, and scrunched paper. No brushes. No rules about the outcome.

02

Cardboard Box Engineering

One box, tape, and whatever is in the recycling bin. The brief: build something.

03

Nature Printing

Collect leaves, flowers, and bark. Press into paint, stamp onto paper. No two prints are ever the same.

04

Story Stones

Paint simple images on rocks. Use them to tell a new story each time they are brought out.

05

Playdough and Loose Parts

Buttons, pasta, sticks, coins. Playdough as the base, loose parts as the design. No direction needed.

06

Watercolour Resist

Draw with white crayon, then paint over with watercolour. The magic reveal is the whole experience.

07

Outdoor Chalk City

Draw roads, buildings, and parks on the driveway. Use toy cars or figures to play in the city they built.

08

Sensory Tray

Fill a tray with rice, sand, or oats. Hide small objects inside. Let them dig, pour, and discover.

09

Collage Making

Old magazines, fabric scraps, wrapping paper. Glue onto cardboard. No theme required from you.

10

Threading and Weaving

Thread pasta or beads onto laces. Weave paper strips into a grid. Fine motor development disguised as play.

Screen-free ideas that actually work, Ages 5 to 8

11

Stop-Motion Animation

Playdough figures and a tablet camera only, no internet. Move, photograph, repeat. Screen time that creates instead of consumes.

12

Bridge Challenge

Build a bridge strong enough to hold a toy car using only newspaper and tape. Real engineering, real problem-solving.

13

Blind Contour Drawing

Draw an object without looking at the paper. Develops observation skills and lets go of perfection in one activity.

14

Comic Strip Creation

Fold paper into 6 panels. Draw a story. Stick figures are perfect. Narrative thinking at its most accessible.

15

Marble Run

Cardboard tubes, tape, books as ramps. Build it, test it, rebuild it. Engineering and resilience in one activity.

16

Pattern Making

Buttons, pebbles, pasta shapes. Create a pattern and repeat it, then challenge a sibling to continue it.

17

Ink Blow Art

Drop watery paint on paper, blow it with a straw. Builds lung strength, breath control, and makes extraordinary art.

18

Self-Portrait Series

Draw your own face once a month for a year. Growth mindset made visible, month by month.

19

Map Making

Draw a map of your home, backyard, or street. Add detail, legends, and hidden treasure. Geography meets creativity.

20

Gratitude Portraits

Draw one person you love each week. Write one thing you love about them underneath. Art as emotional literacy.

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Creativity is not a hobby. It is a developmental foundation.

At Mini Ivy, every structured session is built on the same principle as this guide: children learn best through guided, intentional creative experience. Book a trial and see what 90 minutes of expert-led creative development actually looks like.

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