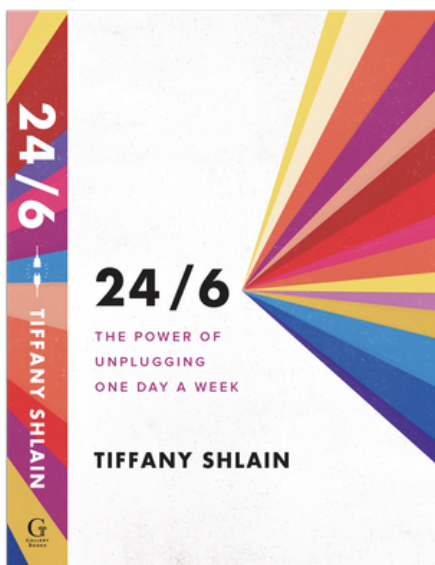


Ideas for Having Fun Without Screens (By Age)

From the book *24/6 The
Power of Unplugging
One Day a Week* by
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Introduction

For the most part, a whole day of unstructured time is wonderful.

But for some people—especially littler ones—you need to be ready with a list of activities.

Actually, for all ages, it's good to be reminded of all the fantastic things there are to do that don't involve screens or being online.

Here are some age-appropriate ideas to keep the day interesting, all suggested by people in those age groups.

AGES 5 AND UNDER

- **Read:** Few activities are better for kids' cognitive development—and your bonding with them—than reading to them. Read old favorites or go to the library and stock up on new ones. Let them help pick out the stories.
- **Write:** Have the children dictate a story to you. When it's done, they can illustrate it. They can draw a self-portrait and dictate an "About the Author" page for the back.
- **Imaginative play:** There are countless options here—school, store, family, restaurant, castle, magicians, robots. Costumes and accessories can make this even more fun.
- **Play games:** Board games, card games, and puzzles. You could even try inventing your own games.
- **Cook:** Put out a bunch of ingredients (e.g., chopped fruits and vegetables, yogurt, hummus, peanut butter, pretzels, crackers) and let the kids combine them to invent new dishes.
- **Craft:** Paint, sculpt, color, draw. Try big art projects, like life-size self-portraits on butcher paper, or smaller ones that use household items like paper towel rolls, paper clips, cotton balls, cotton swabs, bottle caps, etc.
- **Nature:** Go outside. Take a walk or look for interesting bugs and plants.
- **Get physical:** Do yoga, stretch, dance, run, play tag, play with a ball.

AGES 5 AND UNDER

- **Music:** Sing, play an instrument, improvise percussion instruments (spoons, pots, pans, the floor, etc.), or just listen to your favorite songs and have a dance party.
- **Build:** Pillow forts and obstacle courses are especially fun.
- **Hide:** Play hide-and-seek or hide little treasures for the kids to find.
- **Perform:** Encourage the kids to put on a performance for you.
- **Animals:** Visit an animal shelter or a dog park.

AGES 5 TO 12

- **Read:** Any printed material counts, even comic books. At this age, they're old enough to read alone, but it can still be fun and gratifying to read together.
- **Write:** Journal. Write a story or poem, or make a newspaper for the family or the neighborhood. Write a real letter and mail it.
- **Search:** Let the kids create a treasure hunt, complete with cryptic clues.
- **Upcycle:** Turn recycling materials into structures, like a fort or a clubhouse.
- **Invent:** Encourage them to make a prototype of their ideas (brilliant or otherwise).
- **Music:** Practice the instrument they already play or learn a new one. They can even try creating their own.
- **Nature:** Go for a hike—have them dial into the sounds they hear, the scents they smell, and new things they see.
- **Set up shop:** Open a lemonade stand or other pop-up.
- **Play games:** Board games, card games, and puzzles. Or find some cardboard and design your own board game.

AGES 5 TO 12

- **Dress up:** Someone picks a profession (doctor, rock star, librarian) and the other person or people have to go into closets and create that look.
- **Wordplay:** Try learning some phrases in a new language, or even inventing their own.
- **Perform:** Write and perform a play or musical. If the kids are really missing TV, have them write and perform their own TV show.
- **Craft:** Paint, sculpt, color, draw. Make jewelry, knit, or crochet. If you don't know how, you can all learn together.
- **Cook:** Make something to enjoy together, or provide ingredients for an Iron Chef-style cooking challenge.
- **Get physical:** Do yoga, dance, run, ride bikes. Play soccer or basketball.
- **Volunteer:** Helping other people is a wonderful way to spend screen-free time.

AGES 13 TO 17

- Sleep in!
- If you play an instrument, invite friends or family to play music with you. If you don't, and you want to learn, it's a great day to start.
- Read for fun.
- Write for fun. Journal. If you get stuck, you can use these prompts:
 - Write a list of things you are grateful for.
 - Write a list of qualities you like about yourself and things you want to work on.
- Hike, bike, picnic, spend time outdoors.
- Cook a big meal with family, or bake something sweet and share it with friends or neighbors.
- Go for a walk around the neighborhood.
- Do a scavenger hunt with friends.
- Plant something.
- Play soccer, baseball, basketball, Frisbee, or tennis.
- Skate, skateboard, ride a scooter, or rollerblade.

AGES 13 TO 17

- Paint, draw, or sculpt. Make a portrait, a self-portrait, or a still life.
- Sing. Dance.
- Meditate.
- Volunteer at a senior center.
- Go through books you want to donate or give to friends.
- Go to the library or an independent bookstore.
- Play board games or cards. Do a giant puzzle.
- Visit a body of water. Pools count.

AGES 18+

- Cook a big meal with family or friends.
- Bake something for someone else.
- Get some fresh air. Go for a walk around the neighborhood or a long walk in nature.
- Write for pleasure. Journal. Try out these prompts:
 - Write a list of things you're grateful for.
 - Write a list of what you appreciate about your partner or friend.
 - Write a list of qualities you like about yourself and things you want to work on.
 - Write down things you are excited about, things you are worried about, and things you may have worried about that never came to fruition.
- Write a thank-you note or letter to a friend, teacher, or mentor.
- Send a friend a favorite book.
- Pay attention to little moments of beauty and write about them.
- Tell your parents something valuable they have taught you.
- Unplug all appliances that aren't being used.

AGES 18+

- Listen to or play music or just sing. Take up a new instrument.
- Dance!
- Have a picnic.
- Play baseball, basketball, tennis, throw a Frisbee.
- Paint, draw, sculpt, or watercolor.
- Visit an art museum.
- Go to the library or an independent bookstore.
- Go through books you want to donate or give to friends.
- Take a bike ride.
- Fly a kite.
- Play board games, cards, puzzles, charades. Host a game night or a trivia challenge.
- Read for pleasure.
- Read or write a poem.
- Think of your favorite words and teach them to a child in your life.

AGES 18+

- Think of a fun memory with a sibling or cousin and write it in a note to send.
- Use a landline to call someone you miss.
- Visit a community garden, or if you have one of your own, plant something.
- Visit a nearby body of water and go swimming.
- Take a long bath or shower.
- Meditate.
- Do yoga or just stretch.
- Take a nap.

AGES 65+

- **Make plans:** Is there an art show you want to see? Is there a part of town you want to visit? A friend you'd like to catch up with?
- **Start with dinner:** Potluck, or cook together, or go to a restaurant you've been wanting to try or already love.
- **Play cards:** Start a weekly card game.
- **Volunteer:** Shelters and hospitals always need helping hands.
- **Reminisce:** Visit with a different friend each week to share old memories together. Get out the photo albums.
- **Make a project:** Spend Tech Shabbat afternoons putting together the story of your life for posterity, in words, pictures, or both.
- **Exercise:** Swim, take a walk, go to a yoga class.
- **Family time:** Plan screen-free activities with the family (especially grandchildren, if you have any—see lists on pages 185–91 for ideas).