

# Alternative Homework Ideas

---

We compiled this list from ideas collected from the Love and Logic Insider Club members. Thank you to everyone who contributed! We separated the ideas into the following categories (some overlap but we did not duplicate ideas under different categories):

## **Outings**

### **Outdoor Activities**

### **Arts and Crafts**

### **Philanthropy**

### **Games and Activities**

### **Computer Activities**

### **Word/Alphabet Games**

### **Math/Number Activities**

### **Physical Activities**

---

## **Outings**

- Visit your local Children's Museum.
- When on your way somewhere (even locally), stopping at historical sites along the way to develop kids interest in history.
- Visit a zoo: learn to use the map or create your own.
- Visit the local government office and look at recently elected officials' pictures. Collect local budget reports from community agencies (parks and recreation, EPA, Dept of Aging) and discuss why it is important to vote.
- Play at the park.
- Help plan vacation/trip: research attractions, compare and contrast the costs, calculate daily mileage if driving.
- Grocery shopping: read ingredients to help choose the healthiest products for the best prices, find products that you have coupons for, figure out best deal between sizes of items.
- Visit the local dump.
- Counting back change at grocery store, drive through, etc...

- On a drive, see if you can find every letter of the alphabet, in order, on road signs, billboards and Company names. Or just try to find all words starting with a certain letter. Or with numbers.
- Visit historical sites on vacations.
- Learn orienteering. Some cities have Orienteering groups that play games each weekend. They distribute maps with check points and the goal is to get your card punched at each check point. It teaches children to use topography maps and compasses to find their way around.
- Coupon shop game. Find which store doubles or triples coupons. Find the sale and match the coupon. Find out what you will pay for the item after sale and coupon.
- Go to the mall or airport and see how many people you can get to return a smile. Try the same thing at a different mall, or different time of the day. Make a prediction about results or hold a contest. What worked?
- Create field trips for your kids: some ideas: visit a kitchen in a local restaurant, a candy factory, the city jail, the water treatment plant, a brick factory, the power plant, etc...
- Going shopping and computing how much 25/30/50% off would be on the sale price of clothes.
- Go to work with Mom or Dad to see what they do.
- Rounding the bill when shopping to make sure the bill is accurate.
- Go to a play or musical.
- Spring break and summer camps.
- Reading state names on various license plates while in the car make up words using the letters and add up the numbers.
- One person says the name of a geographical place (continent, country, state, city, etc.) and the other person has to name a place that starts with the last letter of that place. For example if one person said Colorado, the other person might say Oregon, followed by New Orleans, then Siberia. (Can be used with any subject)
- Cash Cab: similar to the game show on Discovery Channel were the contestants are quizzed all the way to their destination. If they get 3 strikes (wrong answers) they lose. Quiz on topics like math facts, phonics sounds, geography, social studies, science, etc.
- For a car ride: See It Say It Spell It - find objects in alphabetical order, say them, then spell correcting. No one can take an already spelled object.
- For a car ride: Motor Math - when you see a number come up with a problem it would be the solution to. You can do several variations to fit what your child is working on such as multiples of the number, odd or even, expanded form, etc.
- Trips to the library: look up books by the Dewey decimal numbers.
- On car trips: use an atlas and have a contest to see who can name the capitals of the states, where they are located on the map, major rivers, mountain ranges, etc.
- To learn percentages: take the kids to a clothing store that has a "percent off" sale. Give them 3 minutes to get the EXACT price. You could even buy the item if they are correct.
- Visit a Fish Hatchery.
- Count and compare VW bugs you see on the road.

- Take a city walk to look at how buildings are designed and at art work and murals. Talk about subjects like tagging and graffiti- is it art? Why or why not?
- Visit a community garden.
- Mental Math in the car: Start with the first number that you see and then the team leader (for the trip) calls out add/subtract/multiply or divide so as soon as you see the next number you know how to apply it to the first number. Then shout out that answer and the team leader calls out the next calculation and look for the next number and to apply to the current number. (Numbers can be identified on signs, license plates, street markings, etc)
- Spelling in the car: the team leader thinks of a word, then look for the letters on signs, etc in order and spell the word correctly.
- Geography: count number of different license plates you see while driving.
- Parents can take their children with them to vote.
- Estimating the weight of foods at the grocery store. Using the store scales to see who is closest.
- Visit the same construction site every week to see how a building is going up: watch the progress from the hole in ground, then pipes going in. From there, the foundation, framing, roof and all the other steps in building a home each week can provide new things to talk and think about.
- Grocery store game: let the child pick items from the list. Go to that section of the store and play the "hot" and "cold" game, so they can locate the items.
- Visit local archeological dig sites, and talk about the history of the place as well as the amazing abilities the American Indians had for math and science.
- A game of "Predicting": It's a science/logical reasoning game and goes something like this: In the car, you could ask a question such as "Do you predict the snow will be melted off the driveway today?" Then talk about why or why not - the children are little so it's basic such as, "it's too cold for snow to melt today; it's sunny and warm so the snow should have melted." Another favorite is predicting whether the cows will be in the big field (the person who sent this lives in Maine). Then talk about the time of day when you usually see the cows: in the AM but not so much in the PM. Or, predict whether they'll be way back in the field or close to the road. The possibilities are endless. It is a terrific language, vocabulary and critical thinking game. It also gets to the scientific processes of observing the world around us, asking questions, etc. Other things to predict: Have the kids 'predict' how many times they can jump rope in a given time period, how many steps to get from one place to the next, etc...
- Take a trip to McDonalds: order three sizes of French fries. Before you eat them, count them and divide the cost by the number of fries in the package. The outcome is eye opening and you will learn a lot about packaging and appearances as well as value and expense.
- On any outing, give your kids a tape measure. Have them find something less than 10 inches, find something that is a square, list the inches or cm for the sides, a rectangle, list inches or cm, something 3 meters or feet, etc...
- add more math: add up the cm or inches.

- Keep a book box in the car. Filled with 10 or more books from the library. The kids will always have something new to read on a road trip or even errands around the house.
- "Fire Hydrant Poker": when you are in the car, choose a side of the road and keep track of all the fire hydrants you see. To add complexity, make up a point scheme, such as one point for silver, two points for red, and ten points for yellow.
- Visit a farm.
- Visit 3 different fast food chains. Order 3 "same" Kid's Meals (i.e. - plain cheeseburger, fries and small soda). Blend each meal separately combining all of the items into blender --- puree and pour into graduated cylinder or measuring cup. Let "settle"; fat content will float. Figure % Fat volume to Total volume. Which chain is the least? Which is the greatest?

---

### Outdoor Activities

- Gardening.
- Fishing: learn safety, responsibility, sportsmanship, and nature.
- Walking/hiking: stop and discuss things you see, take pictures to share with classmates, compare local areas to other places.
- Bring three soil samples to school in zip lock bags. Write on the bags where each came from.
- Observe birds and explain to your family how their beaks and feet are suited to what food they eat.
- Maintaining pets: an example: find a typical caterpillar and keep it until it turns into a moth or butterfly. Will allow kids to have to find different plant material for it to eat, water it, wash out its cage. A great science project and it is free.
- Train a dog.
- Build with wood and tools: i.e. tree house, fort, etc.
- Photograph things in nature: talk about the different things you photograph. You could enter photo contests with the pictures. Even if they don't win, it gives them opportunity to go through the entering process, and a chance to learn how to enjoy the experience even if it doesn't involve "winning."
- Go horseback riding and explore nature - identify trees, flowers, weeds, etc; check the water supply in the ponds and streams and talk about the importance of water and clean air. Learn the importance of taking care of our animals; feeding, watering and loving them.
- Run a lemonade stand: made posters, plan a menu for the stand, buy the supplies from a given budget, cashier, count money, roll coins, visited the bank to make the exchange. For another element, donate proceeds to a charity.
- Walking the dog: developing an appreciation/ responsibility for looking after your pet.
- Find a small creek and build a dam out of rocks and mud.
- Go to the forest and build a fort out of limbs.
- Biking.
- Playing catch.
- Skating.

- Swimming.
- Relay races.
- Playing on a playground.
- Learn and perform magic tricks.
- Hopscotch.
- Puddle jumping.
- Go camping.
- Name that state of water: vapor, liquid, solid.
- Name that rock.
- Name that plant.
- Name that insect.
- Measure the sidewalk to figure out how many yards are in a block, etc. Kids can also count how many steps they take over the distance and come up with their own unique measuring unit.
- Take some wide tape and make a bracelet out of it (sticky side out), gather things from nature to make a bracelet and discuss them.
- Find, house and feed a caterpillar to watch it transform into a butterfly. If you don't have caterpillars in your yard or neighborhood, there are butterfly kits available online and in many stores.
- Go outdoors with a bird book and see how many birds you can find that are in that book. Take a tree book and see if you can find those trees in your nearest park. (do the same for bugs, animals, etc.)
- We measured the sun's shadows on the first day of winter and on the first day of summer. Compare and contrast.
- Watch a spider spin a web.

---

### Arts and Crafts

- Make a simple scribble and the other person turns it into a completed composition.
- Origami (Japanese paper folding).
- Make a family banner using hand prints to tell about family member.
- Use a large paper doll to decorate and tell about yourself.
- Disguise a turkey so the farmer can not find him. Use fabric pieces.
- Write a script from their favorite book, do research on the web to find out how to make puppets and produce a puppet show.
- Build models, such as birdhouses, cars, etc. This activity requires organization tools, measuring, cutting, creativity, art, painting, neatness; the list goes on, and at the end, they have something they created, that can be used or enjoyed by them, birds, etc.
- Make jewelry, like bead necklaces.
- Create mosaics from bits of colored paper.
- Learn to scrapbook: involves math by cropping pictures & finding placement using measurements. Use photos, drawings, school projects, etc...
- Make birthday cards for relatives: recycle objects around the house and include a picture of the kids in the card to make the card extra special.

- Color and/or draw.
- Take a picture story book and cover up the written text. Have your child create their own story. Then type it and paste into the book to follow the pictures already there.
- Get simple art supplies: pencils, ball point pens, crayons, cheap water color sets, white paper. Play around with shape, line, color, pattern, if you are up to it - go ahead and draw your child's face, your house, your dog.
- Buy different pasta shapes, then string them on yarn to make strands. Play around with planned pattern, counting the pasta afterwards, or the units of each pattern. Then un-do the strands, sort, and save for cooking later.
- Sewing.
- Make a colorful collage of magazine and newspaper ad pictures
- .Create Art displays for a theme like Easter or Christmas... good wholesome reasons to gather, themed, easy to decorate, fun and could include refreshments.
- Build simple structures with hand tools. Easy = Birdhouse, moving to complex = Kids' Clubhouse. Lots of math in different forms, from shapes to geometry, problem solving, and the satisfaction of building something lasting, rather than simply something to throw away, such as homework.
- Read about an artist - look at the artist's work in a book - color or paint like the artist - and then going to see the artist's work in a museum.
- Knitting.
- Have your child read a short chapter book of their choice, then create a "Character Tube Puppet," made from a paper towel roll core, construction paper, little googly eyes, glue and yarn for hair. Have the kids do a small presentation about their book and the character.
- Create patterns with different types of beans.
- Draw and label a picture of the solar system.
- Make your own play dough: Ingredients: 1 cup flour (not self rising) 1/2 cup salt 1 cup water 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil 1 1/2 tsp cream of tartar (you can also add a few drops of food coloring, any type of extract (for smell), and/or glitter). Step 1: Mix all ingredients in a saucepan, stir over low heat on the stove. Step 2: When the dough rolls into a ball, it is done. Step 3: Keep your play dough soft and fresh by keeping it in an airtight container.
- Make your own board game using your names and names of family/friends and places in your town. Each person is responsible for designing and coloring their side of the board game.
- Make a quilt. This includes: Picking a pattern, Calculating fabric needs, Selecting coordinating fabrics, Measuring and cutting fabric, Sewing by hand or machine, Ironing, Completing a beautiful project that can be useful or decorative.

---

## Philanthropy

- Service projects that involve helping others in the community: i.e. animals, senior citizens, children, helping the environment.

---

## Games and Activities

- Puzzle game called 'Rush Hour.'
- Word searches.
- 'Super Mind' puzzles.
- Froggy Flashcards: Place any set of "flash cards" (sight words, spelling, addition, subtraction, etc.) in a squiggle or zig zag line on the floor of your home. Start at a door, go through rooms, down hallways (use your imagination) and end with some type of motivating surprise (not always food). The child can sing, shout, or whisper the answers as he/she hops from card to card.
- Building Blocks: use blocks to identify shapes, count blocks as you build a project together, how tall can you get the blocks to stack before they fall down? talk about why they fell, use different sizes of blocks and have a tape measure to measure each one. Questions like how long will our project be if we used these 3 blocks, what if we added or subtracted from the amount of blocks, etc...
- Reading out loud to each other.
- Tic tac toe.
- Checkers.
- Buy a placemat that has details about the presidents, states, or any other topic and during dinner ask and discuss the different facts.
- Chutes and ladders.
- Candyland.
- "Find and seek" books; such as Where's Waldo.
- Watch a movie or show together on and talk about it after.
- Play instruments.
- Play Yahtzee.
- Cook as a family: include meal planning within a budget (cost, calories, nutrition), time it takes to create meal, etc.
- Make a graph of TV/Video time for a month. Compare with sleeping and/or exercise.
- Play dress up.
- Read the newspaper.
- While doing chores, time how long it takes to complete a chore and compare which chores take the shortest/longest amounts of time and why they take that much time. Which ones are favorites/least favorites to complete? Then sort them into categories and trade off doing fun and not fun chores to make everyone's work more equal. Add music to make the chores more enjoyable.
- Junior Monopoly/Original Monopoly.
- Read a book together, then watch the movie - compare/contrast the contents.
- "5 State Rummy" The cards have a picture of the United States with all states labeled and each card has the name of a state, with that state highlighted. It also has the name of the capital, the state flower and state bird. It plays like rummy, but instead of gathering suits or runs of cards, you have to gather a set of 5 states that touch. It's a fun game that gives the players a better familiarity with where the states are located.
- ABC Bingo.

- Watch Jeopardy and challenge each other to get the most answers correct.
- Use Oreo Cookies to learn shapes.
- Read labels on cereal boxes in the morning.
- Notice the reflection of your face in a spoon on both sides.
- Break a light bulb and see what's inside.
- Find cocoons and watch them change into butterflies.
- Finding shapes around the house or neighborhood.
- Building and construction projects.
- Buy off the web or catch some tadpoles and watch them change into frogs.
- After Halloween graph your candy. Lay it out and actually physically create a graph. Good for children from preschool on up. Then donate your wrapped candy to the troops over seas. (Local Dentists often collect it and ship it all together.) Can also be done with toys and fruits and vegetables after grocery shopping.
- Listen for found sounds that create music - the gentle hum of the refrigerator, the splashing of rain on the windows, the wind in the trees. Discuss ways that this could make music.
- Play Zoo Tycoon.
- Listen to different genres of music and discuss the differences.
- Plant a seed in a glass container so that you can see the root system.
- Help with remodeling projects to understand geometry.
- To learn colors: spend one week focusing on each color in the rainbow. For example, with yellow: have the kids pick out clothes with yellow, use tub tints to color the bath water yellow, use yellow toys and foods, go on nature hunts for yellow, use small yellow items to create the word yellow, reward with yellow stickers, etc. Finally at the end of the week, visit a store and walk around while the kids point out everything yellow they see. The culmination of each color week can end at the store and the kids can pick a single book with yellow on the cover and a single yellow toy.
- Time Management and telling time: in the mornings, match what you do with a picture of a clock that shows when you should be done with something. For instance, you need to be at the breakfast table by 7:00 am in order to have enough time to eat, and be brushing teeth by 7:20 so you can be out the door by 7:30 to get on the bus.
- Do what I say: this is where you put up some obstacles in the living room (toys on the floor or move furniture around) then one gets blindfolded and has to find their way to a chair on the other side of the room just by following the commands (two steps forward, one step sideways) of another person.
- Plan your own lunch menu.
- To learn money: pull a handful of coins from a pocket or coin jar on a daily/weekly basis. Sort them, count them, etc.
- Play Fizz and Buzz: count and replace 5 (and all its multiples) with the word Fizz and replace 7 (and all its multiples) with the word Buzz.
- Scrabble.
- Pick topics and rotate giving 5 minute speeches to the audience (the rest of the family). Example topic: Pokémon.
- Draw a map to your friends house.



- Write out directions to your school. (with street names)
- Learn how to say hello, goodbye, thank you in 20 languages.
- Draw pictures of what you think you may be doing at age 16, 19, 26, 35, 55, 65, 75 - include a time line.
- Use a penny to teach slides, turns and flips of objects.
- Book clubs with neighbors, family, church group, on a treasured classic book that everyone should read or hear such as Call of the Wild, The Three Musketeers, Sherlock Holmes, and Charlotte's Web.
- Theatre games: acting out stories they are reading, or the germination of a seed, or the signing of the Declaration of Independence.
- Pick a place on the globe and see if the child can figure it out. Example: If you were in Florida and swan across the water to the right what country would you hit? What would you swim across?
- For teens-listen to (conservative) talk shows (TV and radio) and discuss the topics - get the kids to think about the world they live in and what they can do to make a difference.
- Upwords.
- Talk to your kids: what was the best part of your day? Why? What was the worst part of your day? Why?
- Perquackey
- Boggle
- Read about constellations to learn what they look like and read about the solar system and other astronomical phenomena.
- Look at different things in a microscope: i.e. a yogurt culture, flower parts, onion skin, etc.
- Build a K'Nex Roller coaster using several bridges to learn about structural engineering.
- Call a family member and have a phone conversation about what you did that day at school.
- "Invent" something using the various different things in your recycle bin.
- Pop Quiz! "This is great to help kids practice paying attention and remembering. At any moment shout "pop quiz!" then ask your child to remember everything they can about something they just saw or did. Examples are: describe the room we were just in, list the steps you took to do that, what did we all have for a meal, what was that person wearing, etc.
- Singing.
- Give a brief clue (i.e., "In what U.S. war did the Yankees fight the Confederates?") and have the kids answer Jeopardy-style, "What is the Civil War?"
- Name That Historical Figure: read a series of clues until the kids shout out the correct person. (For example: She was born in Idaho around 1786. She was a member of the Shoshone tribe. She was kidnapped by another tribe when she was about 10. She married a French-Canadian fur trapper named Toussaint Charbonneau. She was an American Indian teenager when she guided Lewis and Clark in their famous expedition. Answer: Sacagawea.)
- "Man Bites Dog" (making up funny newspaper headlines)

- "Quiddler" (sort of speed Scrabble with cards)
- Create a song or short melody. Teach it to someone.
- Make up a new game and then try to play it with friends. Make adaptations and try again.
- Field trip around the house, where the heat comes from, and the ducting, or the water, where it comes in and the pipes that take it all over the house.
- Take something a part to see how it works - Reassemble it if possible or create something new with the parts.
- Play restaurant: the kids create the menu, serve and make the food, and then make a bill and collect money (play money of course!)
- Make useful gifts for others that require learning a new skill.
- Do kitchen science experiments: i.e. mixing water and cornstarch or making borax and glue goo, vinegar and baking soda. Explain and discuss what happens.
- Jigsaw puzzles.
- Card games.
- Build snow or couch cushion forts.
- Looking at the blueprints of your house and figuring the square footage of each room.
- Checking temperatures for a month and finding the mean temperature at your house.
- Looking at your family genealogy...what were the customs, traditions, language, where is the country located?
- Create challenging routes of inter-locking train tracks, how to get from here to there, also a lesson in trial and error, and patience "when to take a break.
- My son picks out a page or two in a sticker book. I get the stickers for those pages and explain the directions, opposites, shadows, free for all, counting, then he gets to try it out.
- Watching a show on a "learning channel" such as: Discovery channel, Animal planet, The Learning Channel (TLC), the History channel.
- Have a child take old electronic equipment and take it apart and put it back together.
- Bananagrams.
- 31: card game.
- Foo: dice game.
- Learn to make bread.
- Study the food pyramid.
- Use sidewalk chalk to write the alphabet, spelling words, math problems, etc. on the driveway and sidewalk.
- Paint with water on a hot day and teaching about evaporation and the water cycle.
- Play Battleship.
- Activity for 3-7 year olds: Put an ice cube tray on a cookie sheet and fill the squares in the ice cube tray 1/2 full of water. Put several drops of red food coloring into one square, yellow into one square, and blue into one square. Give them an eye dropper and let them squeeze up drops of each color and see how they mix together to create new colors in the squares with plain water.
- Play The Game of Life.

- 21: card game.
- Chess.
- Play 7-11-or doubles. Dice game -Shake 2 dice, keep adding up what you shake. You can go as many times during your turn as you want, but if you shake a 7 or 11 it zeros out your turn and your turn is over. If you shake doubles you have to shake again. If you touch the dice to pass them, you have to shake again. When your turn is over, write your score down. First person to reach 200 wins. You have to shake 21 points to "get on the board" (first round only). After that you can quit shaking whenever you want. Variations: play teams and up the point total.)
- Get involved in International Events at the local college, so you can learn how other countries are.
- Weird food night: go to the store, find a piece of produce that you have never heard of, and find out where it is from, and how to eat it.
- Darts.
- Idea from a teacher: I had a traveling backpack. It contained a stuffed animal, a notebook, and a pen or pencil. Kids took turns taking the backpack home. At home, they would have fun with the stuffed animal. They could read to it, play a game with it, or take it with them wherever they went. For kids who didn't have anyone at home to read with, this was enjoyable for them because they had an audience. They sometimes would "flashcard" the stuffed animal, practice spelling words, or try to teach it something they learned in school that day. As their day was winding down, they would write about what they did in the journal that was included in the backpack. They would also read what the other children (who had already taken a turn) had written when it was their turn. This gave them practice in both reading and writing. It also let students (and their parents) see how their writing stacked up to others who came before them. They would often try harder to do a good job. They knew what they wrote would be shared with others after them. In the morning back at school, they could read what they wrote to the rest of the class.
- Close your eyes and listen to a sound-what is it?
- I spy.
- Piggy bank savings—hands on learning how much coins and bills are worth-how much a desired item costs-how long it takes to earn/save for a particular item.
- Family charades.
- Tell each other knock-knock jokes.
- Making up stories together, each person contributing a sentence or two, and then seeing where it goes.
- Alter the rules of the game "Uno" to make it "Math Uno" - in our rules, you can make combinations of cards to equal the card showing. For instance, if you must match a green 4, and have a red 6 and a blue 2, you can play them both because  $6-2=4$ . Color doesn't matter.
- An activity to learn area and perimeter: have the kids redecorate their rooms. Parents can help them measure their bedrooms: floors, walls, ceilings, and all the furniture. From those measurements, they can calculate how much paint it would take to cover their walls and ceilings, and how much carpet/hard flooring it would take to cover their floor. They can calculate how much crown molding and

baseboard they would need. Scale drawings or models to show their new colors, etc. can be made. Then they can use catalogs (that give exact dimensions of the furniture) to find all new furnishings that will fit into the available space in the room. They can also research costs of all the items, and figure a final total cost for refurbishing their rooms. It's also fun to have them figure out an estimated cost and budget for the new room, then see how close they came when they find the actual cost of materials. If the students share a room with a sibling, dividing the space equally is another challenge they can work on.

- Have your child be the teacher and parent is the student. Practice subjects like spelling, math, etc.
- Make up stories about your family. They can be silly, made-up, real, have a theme, etc...
- Have the kids divide socks by owner and then match mates: a good way to teach organization techniques.
- Square dancing: teach a new square dance step each day. Practice your steps, and build upon what you learned the previous day. Practice the routine and perform for a group. Great for learning left and right, rhythm, as well as reinforcing listening skills.
- Play Apples to Apples.
- Analyze announcements/commercials on TV and reflect about them.
- Summarize a cartoon or program you've watched together
- List character traits for a character in a story or on a show
- Asking, "What do you think will happen next?" at any point in a story. And then asking, "Why do you think that?"
- Build models.
- Play "I Remember" and ask your kids to talk about something in the past.
- Build ships out of legos and tinkertoys, then use math to calculate fuel, food and ammo needs for each "mission." You can include a "star map" to draw on, including paths to the stars and drawing circles for the stars and planets.
- Keep a journal, write in it regularly.
- Start a collection: i.e. baseball cards, rocks, stamps, etc.
- Play grocery store out of your cupboards/pantry.
- Cranium games: such as Cranium Funfolio which has a deck of cards with lots of activities like "pick 5 soft things in your house, now compare and decide which one is the softest or has the most stripes, etc."
- Scavenger hunts.
- Lie in the grass and look at clouds, shades of blue, hunt for growth on trees, lie in the grass and look for constellations.
- Write notes on napkins that each of you can take with for lunch during the week.
- Help them to get in touch with a neighbor or family member who is at least 70 years old. Ask them some questions about technology when they were young and how things have changed in general.
- Bring home a stuffed animal from school and writing a short story about the animal to share with the class. This is creative writing and pictures can be added. Spelling is not the focus.
- Drop a small rubber ball onto a balloon, observe what happens.

- Watch, record, measure current weather conditions.
- Organize a closet or work space.
- Wire video components.
- Assemble a piece of furniture.
- Play Rummikub.
- Play Stare Jr.
- Build a better drink can: provide a set volume and ask the kids to build the can with the least surface area. Is the type of packaging for (this item) the best possible design? What other shapes would be more efficient and why? What impact does changing the dimensions of a side have on the resulting volume?
- Moving furniture - calculating space.
- Painting/Sanding - reading instructions.
- Child and parent pick an article in the newspaper to read and discuss together.
- Play-dough is great for discovering how colors combine to make additional colors as well as using it to "write" their names.
- Pictionary is fun for all ages and a great memorable way to practice vocabulary for upcoming tests.
- Charades is also ideal for elementary to college age. Just remember that if you are in a testing center and recalling how your brother demonstrated "fog", it is important not to laugh aloud.
- Play the game of cribbage.
- Play dominoes.
- Mad-libs help to understand parts of speech & can be hysterical fun.
- Sort through the kitchen or house and identify different shapes - squares, triangles, cylinders, sphere's, circles, irregular, regular.
- Using pretend (or real) food, divide into 4 food groups. Learn the food pyramid.

---

### Computer Activities

- Email relatives: this makes writing and spelling words fun.
- [www.mathfactory.com](http://www.mathfactory.com)
- Type spelling words on the computer several times.
- Make a word search out of your spelling words:  
<http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/>
- <http://www.spellingcity.com/>
- <http://www.Kidspell.com>
- Rosetta Stone language courses (you can purchase the programs or request them from your local library)
- Download hand writing from the web to practice writing.
- Blokus: <http://www.blokus.com/>
- Sudoku: <http://www.websudoku.com/?level=2>
- Kenken: <http://kenken.com/emailspecial.html>
- Set game: <http://www.setgame.com/>
- Real time strategy games: such as Age of Empires and Rise of Nations
- Blink: <http://www.educationalllearninggames.com/blink-card-game.asp>
- Rush hour: <http://eslus.com/Gizmos/rushhour/rushHour.html>

- Game of 24: <http://www.youreedrive.com/games/arithmetric24/>
- Pente:  
<http://boardgames.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.geocities.com%2FSoHo%2F5119%2Fajpente.html>
- [www.homework.com](http://www.homework.com)
- Do research off the web to figure how to fold a really cool paper plane.
- Musical/Math Fun: <http://www.philtulga.com/Fraction%20Tubes.html>
- Some of the sites are varied in skills or refer you to other sites:  
<http://www.tessellations.org>, <http://www.biglearning.com/big-learning-math-activities.htm>
- Use Google Earth and Google mapper to measure distance, find routes, and calculate travel times, learn about and see geographic names and places . Find your own house, find your school, etc.
- [Kidhealth.com](http://www.kidhealth.com)
- <http://www.sciencenewsforkids.org>
- A super fun site to improve keyboarding skills:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing/>
- This site has many other subjects to explore in a game format:
- <http://www.iknowthat.com/com>
- This is math, but there are other sites for science and such as well:  
<http://www.coolmath4kids.com/>
- <http://www.aplusmath.com/>
- <http://www.nationalhistoryday.org/>
- <http://www.starfall.com>
- <http://www.apples4theteacher.com/math.html>
- <http://www.softschools.com/>
- Language and math games here: <http://www.kprobe.com/kprobe/index.htm>
- Science fun here: <http://www.nwf.org/kids>
- <http://www.homefires.com/clickschool/>: archive of fun learning websites in center of page within article.
- It requires having a computer and printer at home (not all families do). Go to a crossword web site and create a free crossword puzzle. Put in family members' names plus a clue about each family member (positive of course). The program will then create a crossword puzzle with the names. The puzzle can be printed out.
- Math Games website: <http://www.mathcats.com/explore.html>
- Fire Safety for children: [www.sparky.org](http://www.sparky.org)
- NASA's 50th Anniversary (Space and Science information):  
<http://www.nasa.gov/externalflash/50th/main.html>
- Science information about slimy, yucky nature stuff:  
<http://yucky.discovery.com/flash/>
- Get free clip art and photos of thousands of items:  
<http://www.classroomclipart.com/>

---

## Word/Alphabet Games

- Play animal names or a version of eye spy: say "I spy an insect that brown with 6 legs and it begins with a "a" and we sound out the "a": they guess ant: but use all the animals and insects, and say where you can find it on the farm or zoo or jungle or ocean or pond, etc. (good for car)
- Draw out the letters on the sidewalk in a scrambled square and have the kids jump from box to box spelling out the appropriate spelling word.
- Use a tray filled with rice and spell words in the tray.
- 20 Questions with Animals: One person thinks of the animal while the others try to guess it by asking yes or no questions.
- Write letters (not emails) to out of town relatives.
- Write each spelling word in something interesting like shaving cream, sand, pudding, rice, yarn, spaghetti, alphabet macaroni or cereal, cake batter, brownie mix, fog in the bathroom mirror, magnetic letters, Yarn on the carpet, Wikki Sticks, Tub foam soap, Tub crayons, Body Crayons, Dry erase marker on a window or dry erase board, Chalk board, Pipe cleaners, Letters made out of glitter glue then trace with a finger, etc...
- Write a poem using your spelling words.
- Three word choice/circle correct spelled word (once you have a few practice tests where you can see how the child is spelling the words incorrectly, create a worksheet that has each word spelled three times, one way it is spelled correctly and the other two ways it is spelled incorrectly the way they most often misspell the word. They have to pick the correct one).
- Spell words by cutting out words/letters from newspapers or magazines and gluing them on a sheet of construction paper.
- Have a "spelling B"
- Make a book using family members' names to learn the letters. (Ex: K is for Katie.) Add a photo of the person. Could do this for anything that interests the child: animals, cars, etc.
- Color code the parts of each spelling word (vowels, single consonants, consonant blends, etc...)
- Use closed captioning when watching TV or movies with your children, regardless of their hearing ability. It's one more way to expose them to printed language. Once in a while you can turn the volume down & challenge your older children to 'read' their favorite program!
- Find spelling and vocabulary words in newspapers, magazines, reading-for-fun books, and even junk mail.
- Identify grammatical errors on television, in songs on the radio, and in print.
- Make a puzzle (crosswords puzzles) with spelling words.
- Play the dictionary game: one person calls out an obscure word from the dictionary and everyone has to tell them what it means.
- Choose 3 spelling words and write a silly sentence. Continue doing this until you have used all words.
- Practice spelling you words using sign language.
- Write a letter to a friend using as many of your spelling words as you can.
- Use glow in the dark pens to write your spelling words. Hang them in a dark place to review.

- Use alphabet stamps and stamp out your words on paper.
- Make flashcards for your spelling word and have someone quiz you.
- Create word analogies using the words (Ex. Heart is to body as motor is to lawn mower).
- Have the kids spell what they want. It is amazing how easily a young child learns to spell dessert.
- Spelling power.
- Practice writing name/ABC's in whip cream on the counter or write in wet sand at the park.
- Play the opposites game. The opposite of "in" is... The opposite of "black" is... Try this with rhyming as well, or beginning sounds of words. "How many words can you think of that begin with a "ch" sound?"
- Try tongue-twisters together. Six sick sheep, Betty Botter, or the phrase "in an anemone" from Finding Nemo.
- "The Alphabet Game": have the kids go anywhere in the house to find an item that starts with the letter A, then B etc. They can either alternate where one gets A and the next gets B, or they can both find an A item and then both find a B item. They don't have to bring it over to you, but just shout out what it is. Also, they have to wait for the other one to finish before they go to their next letter.
- Spelling Simon Says: say something like, "Do jumping jacks while you spell 'character,' or 'walk like a crab while you spell trough.'"
- The dictionary game: works well at dinner. Each person takes turns being the "dictionary". This person says "I am thinking of a word - it has \* letters and starts with a \*" The other people try to guess the word by asking questions. Of course the first question is always "what part of speech is it?" The more obscure the word the harder it is to figure out so the kids are encouraged to come up with words they think others don't know or words that aren't regularly used. One rule though - no looking in the dictionary before your turn - it has to be a word you come up with from memory.
- Label different items around the house (TV, stairs, couch, etc) to help young kids learn to read and identify objects.
- Singing Spelling, have the kids spell their words while they sing in funny voices.
- "Hinky-Pinky": think of two words which rhyme, give clues for both words, and tell whether they are a "hinky-pinky" words which means they are two syllable words, or "hink-pink", "hinkety-pinkety", or "hink-hinkety-pink-pinkety" words which means they are one, three, or four syllable words respectively. Clues for a "hinky-pinky" word pair might be: "someone you don't know"-"peril". The answer is: "stranger"-"danger". You can combine one and two syllable words such as a "hink-pinky": "a circular piece of jewelry"-"a digit on your hand" = "ring"-"finger".
- Write at least one rhyming word for each spelling word.
- Alphabetize things in the kitchen. IE canned goods, fruits, veggies
- Spelling game: flashlight hide and seek. Write spelling words on index cards and hide them around the house or in a room. Turn out the lights and give the kids a flashlight. They have to search the house or a room for their spelling words. When they find them, they have to say the word out loud and then turn off the flashlight



and spell the word. When they spell the word correctly, they turn the flashlight back on and find another word - etc. After all the words have been collected - if they are willing, go through the words like flashcards and they spell them out loud or write them (their choice).

- Using a thesaurus, find synonyms and antonyms for the words and use them in sentences.
- Sound blending guessing game: Parent sounds out words with a short pause between each sound, c-a-t. The child guesses the word and gets a point for each word guessed correctly. Pre-school children can do this with single syllable words and more advanced, multi-syllable words.
- Play a story game - one person starts a story and tells 2 or 3 sentences of the story then the next person picks up and continues the story.
- Create riddles with your spelling words and the answers.
- Make spelling words rainbows - write the word in pencil and then trace over the letters a number of times in different colored pencils.
- Write spelling words while also saying them out loud to see and hear them at the same time.
- Practice memorization with poetry, state capitals, presidents, etc...
- Write on a self-selected topic.
- For spelling word practice, use a paint stick and spring loaded clothes pins with letters of the alphabet on each one. (Duplicates for vowels and frequently used consonants). Build the words with the clothes pins and attach them to the paint stick.
- List five things and the kids have to guess what category they all fit into: i.e. say cow, pig, duck, sheep, horse and they would guess "farm animals." You can reverse it by giving a category and tell them to name five things in that category. You can also use a timer to see how many words they can come up with in a minute.
- Use a Toaster Strudel to write a difficult spelling word each morning. Move on to a different word when your child can correctly spell the current word.
- Letter of the week: choose a letter (typically begin with A and work through Z). Do activities with the letter like drawing and other art projects to create the letter. Even create a book with the projects. Point out different things that begin with the letter. Eat foods that begin with the letter, etc...
- "I opened my grandmother's trunk and inside I found...": The first person finds something that starts with an "a", the second person finds the "a" thing and adds something that starts with a "b", the third person finds the "a" and "b" things and adds a "c" thing and so on and so on. So, that by the time you get to the end of the alphabet the last person has to remember 25 things AND find something that starts with a "z."
- Finding rhyming words in songs on the radio.
- Reading game: play "I read" and "You read", take turns reading. Let them help you pronounce words and you help them.
- To learn another language: We play the English/other language game. Say a word in English then say it in the other language and try to use it in a sentence.

- Give kids a doodle pad. Spell out some letters and have the kids write them down and read the words back to you. Or give them a word and have them write it down and spell it back to you.
- Toss Up: Costs about \$6-7. Consists of about 10 dice that are marked red, yellow and green (think stop light). The idea is you roll the dice and add up all the green. Take the remaining dice (that aren't green) and decide if you want to stay or continue rolling. If you continue rolling you can add the green to your current total. If you don't get any green on that roll your turn is over and you lose the points you earned in that round. You can stop at any time and keep the total. Then next round if you get any greens to keep you add it to the previous total. Depending on the ability of the child to add, you can play to 25, 50, 100, 500, etc. Official description: The object of the game is to be the player with the highest score over 100, which you rack up by throwing the dice and counting up the greens. As long as you roll greens you can continue to play and rack up points. But, just like a traffic light, you need to watch out for those red dice or your turn will stop and you'll lose all of your points. So who will win the game? It's a toss up! Game contains 10 Toss Up! dice, a reusable plastic storage click-case and instructions in both English and Spanish. For 2 - 6 players.
- Play the Farming Game: a board game where calculations and reading charts have to be done.
- Play 20 questions verbally, not the electronic games in the store.
- Memory/match game.
- Spell simple words, do simple arithmetic problems, or simple shapes with your finger on the child's back for them to guess.
- Play phase 10 dice and the kids add up the score.
- Play "Sight Word Go Fish."
- Close your eyes and take turns naming sounds you hear.
- Point to things you see, or note things you hear and define them as "people-created" or "nature-created."
- Listen to books on tape.
- Picnic in the dark on a winter night, see what a familiar place looks and sounds like without sunlight.
- Make your own raisins.
- Develop a fire escape plan for your home and family.
- Freeze fruit and see how it tastes.
- Tantrix: Costs about \$8-10. This is a puzzle game with 10 numbered tiles 1-10. The tiles have different colored lines & curves on the back. You start with 3 tiles, 1-3. You make a loop with the color of the number on the back of the #3 tile. Then you make one for the #4 tile. They get more difficult & challenging as you progress. It really challenges you to think differently. Official description: Players create loops of specific colors by following the color of the number on the back of each tile. Here is how: Take tiles marked #1, 2 and 3. The numbers are marked in yellow, indicating what color of loop you must create. Form a loop of yellow. Then, break up the loop, find the tile marked #4, (in red) add it to the mix, and create a red loop. Continue until all 10 tiles are in play! This award winning puzzle becomes more challenging with each tile added. Additional packs of 10

tiles can be added into play, promoting endless hours of fun! Our New wood crate takes less shelf space!

- Solitaire, ages 8+.
- Blink: Costs about \$5-6. A 5 minute card game that 2 people play. You divide the deck up evenly and both flip over a card. You can have 5 cards in your hand at once. This is an attribute game. You can play on either flipped card. You can play the same color, number or shape on the flipped card. For example, if the flipped card is 3 blue stars. I can play any card in my hand that is a 3, blue or stars. As I play cards on the flipped pile I can pick up another card from my deck. Play continues until one player is out of cards. Very fun and fast! Official description: Blink is the lightning fast game where two players race to be the first to play all of their cards. Using sharp eyes and fast hands, quickly try to match the shape, count, or color on the cards. Be the first player out of cards, and win! Fast and portable, Blink is instant fun for everyone!
- Geocaching: It's high tech "treasure" hunting where you use a GPS unit to find a box of trinkets someone planted. Then you can go on-line to journal your find.
- Hangman.
- Chocolate Fix.
- Name the pictures in the "My first 100 words" book.
- Sing ABCs and name the letters, plus something that starts with the letter.
- Use foam to create large shapes of letters and have the child trace the shape with their arms, foot, etc.
- Water-paint names, shapes, letters on the cement with water and large paintbrushes. No cleanup needed!
- Place index cards on objects around the house, with the name of the object on them, to help kids learn to read.

---

### Math/Number Activities

- Use homemade pizza, pie, pieces of bread to work on fractions.
- Use a fish tank to discuss conversions: gallons to liters to ounces.
- Create items for an "Estimation Table" where kids "estimate" how many items are in different containers with colorful objects.
- For multiplication facts, I have small blocks with multiplication factors on them. There is also a block with  $<$ ,  $>$ , and  $=$ . The child rolls two blocks (like dice), solves to find the product of each one, and places the  $\diamond =$  block in the middle to show the correct information.
- Addition and subtraction of food on their plate during dinner. It works really well using vegetables!
- Play Addition War. Get a card deck. Place face down. First player turns over two cards and adds the two sums. Second player turns over two cards and adds the two sums. Compare the sums. The person with the highest sum gets to keep all the cards. Repeat until no cards are left. The winner is the player with the most cards.
- Measure the time it takes to count to ten, one hundred.
- Count the steps it takes you to get to different locations in your house from the front door.

- Go bowling. Keep score manually instead of letting the computer do it.
- For toddlers, count to 10 or twenty together while toweling their hair off after a bath or while brushing their hair each day.
- Use stamps/stickers to make a math/counting book.
- Play Higher/Lower, Bigger/Smaller: mention either two numbers or two objects and the kids have to tell you which is higher/lower or bigger/smaller.
- Calculating how fast a runner/swimmer/speed skater ran/swam/skated per lap to win a race. (think Olympics)
- Measure the angle of shadows being cast in your house.
- Double Shutter.
- Plan a party or holiday feast using grocery ads.
- Learn how to count to ten in English, Spanish, German, etc.
- Use M&Ms to learn addition and subtraction.
- Count windows & doors.
- Compute people's ages from their birthdays.
- Compute people's ages at a certain date or event in the future.
- Compare amount of food in cereal boxes vs. size of boxes and discuss.
- Look for geometric shapes in the yard, the store, or at home. Cut them out. Measure them.
- Addition Bingo: call out an equation, such as "4+9" and the kids have to look for the right answer on their Bingo card that parents can draw on a sheet of paper.
- Multiplication Twister: write (with a washable marker) on your Twister mat some of the times tables you are working on. For example, the products of the 7 times tables on the mat, leader calls out "7x8" and they have to figure it out and jump to the circle where it says 56.
- Measure things in your home. Older kiddos can convert measurements and find area and perimeter.
- Count the number of mirrors or TV's or anything in your home for younger kiddos.
- Keep track of the amount of time it takes to do something. Start and end time, elapsed time.
- Teach kids how to use eBay properly - the importance of looking at SHIPPING CHARGES as well as the cost of the item, and how to calculate TOTAL COST (including shipping) to find the best deal.
- Teach how to calculate gas mileage.
- Cut up pool noodles into little strips and do all sorts of math.
- Watching TV: learn how to plan ahead, make choices, break up time into fractions ("I have 60 minutes - okay, I'll use 1/2 to watch program "x", 1/3 of the remaining time I'll watch the end of my favorite game show and the remaining 2/3 of time or 1/3 of the original hour, I'll spend watching "y")
- Maintain a checking account or manage an allowance.
- To practice multiplication facts a mom had her older son and my second son sit next to each other. She had flash cards and a bowl of popcorn. If the older one got the math fact right he got to try and catch popcorn in his mouth, if he got it wrong, his brother got the chance. This helped the older one learn and the younger one was exposed to the idea of multiplication tables.

- Growth chart for the child.
- Math-it.
- Right start math games.
- Baking to learn math: make a triple or quadruple batch of cookies, then store the dough in the freezer in balls. Practice fractions when doubling up the recipe, and you can see how many cookie dough balls will fit into a container. Use a tiny muffin scooper, or melon baller, and make the cookie dough into balls. Place 12 in a row, or 15, and make 12 - 15 rows in each pan. The kids can calculate how many will fit, learning about area, perimeter, and volume along the way.
- Marshmallow math - done with multicolor miniature marshmallows- sorting, counting, comparing, adding, subtracting, and eating!
- Measurement activity for 4-6 year olds: From the recycling bin, give your child clear plastic bottles of different sizes (juice, salad dressing, soda, mayonnaise, etc.,) a one-cup measuring cup, and a jug of water. Child estimates how many cups will go into each container, then measures and pours to determine the actual count. This can teach estimating, counting, and observation. Containers that are taller may not hold more water. Variations: 1. The water can be colored with food dye to add extra interest. Several different containers of water in different colors can be used, and the child can witness color-changing combinations. 2. This activity can be done in the bathtub if the child has not yet had any pouring practice. Little mess to clean up!
- To understand the influence of advertising on its audience, have child and parent count the number of minutes commercials run during a 30 minute program. Total the minutes and compare to the running time of the program. Compare these numbers with an hourly program.
- The money exchange game: This is played with a 5 year old. He has a container of coins. He gets coins added to it for various things. He is given pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters. Throughout the day, he gets to go to his jar and select different combinations and bring them to his parents. If he brings two dimes and a nickel, they exchange it for a quarter. If he brings them five pennies, they exchange it for a nickel, etc. If he brings them the wrong combination, they ask him what he thinks they should exchange it for. He usually totals it up and realizes he made a mistake. He goes back to his jar and looks again.
- For young learners, Hi Ho CherrieO is a great early counting game.
- Tell stories (how silly is up to you) that have math problems at the end, similar to the story problems we had when we were in school.
- Counting: anything and everything; like the number of seeds in your green beans at dinner or guessing how many peas are in the pod, or the number of lights on/off in the house (also teaching them the concept of saving energy)
- Use dance and rhythm to teach math skills.
- Hop scotch to learn how to count to 10.
- Measure the diameters of dinner plates.
- Measure the length of the tile in your bathroom or kitchen. Discuss the difference between feet and inches.
- Set digital clocks 7 minutes fast. It helps to be on time but more importantly, the kids have to use math skills to determine the real time.

- Sort items by size, then take the same items and sort them by weight. Actually weigh and measure the items.
- Pick some pine needles off a tree. Count how many are in a group. Demonstrate addition and multiplication with them.
- Uncle Wiggly board game: great for practice in counting larger numbers and has a board that goes all the way to 100 - much easier to follow than shoots and ladders.
- Find the hymn number in the hymnal.
- Count the number of people coming over for dinner and set out enough dinnerware for all.
- We want four tickets for the hockey game. How much money do we need to take to the arena?
- These shoes are on sale for 20% off. How much will they cost?
- We need 20 stamps at the post office. How much money will we need?

---

### **Physical Activities**

- In the bath, practice Bubble Blowing, Sink and Float with various objects and measurement.
- Play sports or after school activities.
- Establish daily exercise plan: calculate distance walked, swam, biked, etc. and how many calories are used.
- Spell words or do multiplication tables as you jump on a trampoline- one letter/number per jump.
- Spell words or do multiplication tables as you play basketball. One letter/number per shot.
- Spell words or do multiplication tables as you jump rope.

©2009 Love and Logic Institute, Inc.

Permission granted for photocopy reproduction.

Please do not alter or modify contents. For more information, call the Love and Logic Institute, Inc. at 800-338-4065.