

# Learning Activities for Tweens and Teens

Keep your children learning and safely occupied while they're not in school and can't hang out with friends. This guide features tween- and teen-friendly activities and challenges, including a bingo card on the back.



**Editor's note:** Guidelines are changing rapidly. Make sure to follow all local, state, and federal laws and recommendations on social distancing and other practices when using these ideas.

## Creative writing

Motivate your child to enjoy writing with these suggestions.

**Free write.** Encourage her to set a timer for five minutes and write anything she wants (even if she begins with, "I'm not sure what to write..."). Your tween will probably get on a roll, and she just might want to keep writing when time's up!

**Share responses.** Have family members take turns posting a random topic of the week on the refrigerator. *Examples:* "Predict a 22nd-century technology trend" or "Do you think people should eat only 'breakfast foods' for breakfast? Why or why not?" Everyone writes a response to the topic, and you can share them at the end of the week.

## A stellar vocabulary

Hearing and using new words frequently can make them a permanent part of your teen's vocabulary. Try these strategies for helping him learn new words.

**Play.** Use words from his schoolwork in family games. Have your tween write each word on a separate index card. For example, if he's studying sound and light in science, you could play Pictionary with words like *wavelength* and *prism* or act out *frequency* and *reflection* in a game of charades.

**Search.** When your middle grader comes across a new word in a novel, suggest that he jot it down. Then, he can be on the lookout for the word in magazines and newspapers. He can also listen for it in conversations, on TV, and on the radio—he'll learn to understand the word in a variety of contexts.



## Real-world math

Showing your teen how math relates to her own life—or to things she cares about—is one of the best ways to motivate her to practice. Here are ideas.

**Figure out financing.** Maybe your teenager wants to buy a used car. Have her compare financing plans. Then, she could create a spreadsheet showing the final cost based on different interest rates and the term (number of months) for repaying a loan.

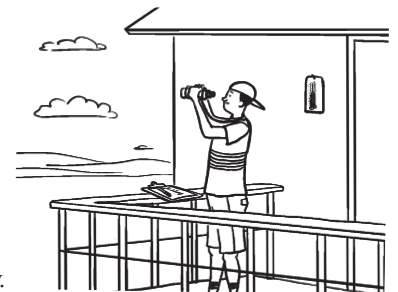
**Explore careers.** Perhaps she's dreaming of being an architect or a fashion designer. There's a lot of math in those fields, along with many others. Encourage her to sketch her dream house and use art materials and math tools to build a model to scale. Or she might design a skirt and then figure out how much it would cost to buy the materials to make it.

## Everyday science

Spark your middle or high schooler's interest in science by letting him see how it relates to his life. Share these tips.

**Watch the weather.** Have your child observe clouds and read forecasts in the newspaper for a week. Can he predict the weather? *Example:* "The clear sky tonight probably means cooler temperatures in the morning. In the afternoon, temperatures will rise, and the barometric pressure will drop, so there's a chance of evening thunderstorms."



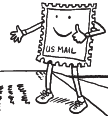

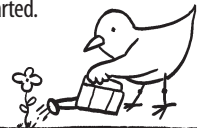
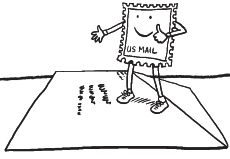






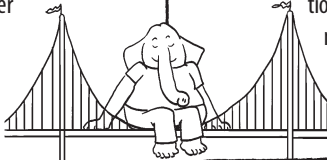
**Solve "mysteries."** Encourage your teen to keep a log of questions he thinks of and look up answers. Maybe he'll do research to learn how GPS works or why roller coasters rely on gravity.



*continued*

**Instructions:** Do the activities on this bingo card in any order you choose. When you get five in a row (vertically, horizontally, or diagonally), you've earned BINGO. Keep going until you've completed the entire card—that's Super BINGO!



B	I	N	G	O
<p>Start a "quarantine journal." You might write about silver linings (fun video chats, comfy clothes) or acts of kindness (neighbors sharing supplies, volunteers making masks).</p> 	<p>Solve this math puzzle:  <math>\bullet + \bullet + \bullet = 90</math>  <math>\bullet + \heartsuit + \heartsuit = 60</math>  <math>\heartsuit + \star + \star = 25</math>  <math>\bullet \times \heartsuit \times \star = ?</math>                      Now make up more puzzles like this for family members to solve.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Answer: 2,250</i></p>	<p>Make a meal plan for the week. Find dinner recipes that use ingredients you have on hand. Share the plan with your parents, and offer to cook some of the meals for them—especially if they're busy working.</p> 	<p>Ask grandparents and other older relatives to recommend novels they enjoyed as teenagers. Download e-book versions from the library. When you finish a book, call the relative who suggested it, and discuss it.</p>	<p>Choose several board games, and mix and match the boards and playing pieces to invent a new game. Write down the rules, and teach your family to play.</p> 
<p>There are more than 1,000 words in the word <i>celebration</i>. See how many you can list. (Use the letters in any order.) <i>Examples: clarinet, earlobe, linear.</i></p> 	<p>Engineer a mini-golf course on poster board. Arrange straws to make borders, and add obstacles like plastic cups and bottle caps. Glue everything down, then use a pencil to putt a marble through the course.</p>	<p>Film yourself reading aloud your old picture books (or children's e-books from the library). Share the videos with younger cousins and other little ones you know.</p>	<p>Brainstorm a list of hobbies you'd like to try. Maybe you've always wanted to learn to garden, sew, perform card tricks, or use sign language. Choose one, and get started.</p> 	<p>Write a letter to each of your teachers. Tell them what you like best about their classes, and share a little about how it's going at home. Also, ask how they're doing—and thank them for all their hard work!</p> 
<p>Create themed playlists. <i>Examples:</i> Feel-good songs, songs with an animal in the title, 80s songs. You might ask friends to do the same, then share your lists.</p> 	<p>Make a magic square. Draw a grid with 5 rows and 5 columns. Write the numbers 1–25 in the squares so that each row, column, and diagonal adds up to 75.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FREE SPACE</b></p> 	<p>Use a 4-ft. piece of yarn to form various shapes (hexagon, square, triangle). Lay playing cards inside each shape so that no cards overlap. Which shape holds the most cards?</p>	<p>Hold a family quiz show. Call or email relatives, and ask them to share facts about themselves. Turn the facts into questions ("Who ran the Boston Marathon?") and host your show via video chat.</p> 
<p>Create a photo exhibit using a free app like Google Photos or Slidebox. Choose a theme, take pictures, and share with family and friends. <i>Theme ideas:</i> water, hobbies, the color yellow.</p> 	<p>Set up a chain reaction. Use household objects like building blocks, paper cups, dominoes, ramps, and balls. Can you make the reaction last for one minute? Three minutes?</p>	<p>Cut out pictures of objects from magazines and catalogs. Glue each one on a separate sheet of paper and staple the pages together to make a book. Write a pretend headline for each one.</p>	<p>Play Solitaire. The version that's familiar to most people is called Klondike Solitaire. Look online for variations, such as Clock Solitaire or Pyramid Solitaire.</p> 	<p>There are about 7.5 billion people on Earth. If the population grows 1% annually, how many people would there be in 2050? What would the population be in 3000?</p>
<p>LOL! Make a slang and text-speak dictionary for your parents. Put the entries in alphabetical order. Include definitions and sample sentences using the terms.</p>	<p>Give your memory a workout—and amaze people. Memorize all the state capitals, U.S. presidents, or elements of the periodic table.</p> 	<p>With permission, clean out and organize one closet, drawer, cabinet, or shelf in your home. Be sure to take before and after pictures—you may be inspired to keep cleaning!</p>	<p>Build bridges with craft sticks. Search online for "types of bridges." Can you design a suspension bridge, a truss bridge, and a cantilever bridge?</p> 	<p>Lift everyone's spirits. Collect positive news articles, and glue them into a scrapbook or on poster board. Display the collection for family members to read.</p>

## Middle Years • High School Years