



SUMMER-FALL-WINTER-SPRING FAMILY PLAY PLANS

Busy families often find it hard to set aside time for play, especially with the distraction of screens and technology.

TRUCE offers some seasonal, screen-free ideas to inspire your whole family — whatever their ages—to play together.



WINTER FAMILY PLAY PLAN

Turn off the Screen & Turn on the FORTS

Building indoor forts or hideouts offers endless opportunities for family playtime.

Building forts or hideouts with blankets and pillows, using household items like sofas, tables, and chairs, is a wonderful tradition of childhood. As children build them, they develop creativity, learn spatial awareness, and practice the laws of physics, too. When families play together, children learn skills like cooperation, turn taking, and problem-solving. And, of course, it's just plain fun for everyone.

Watch children as they play. This can help you figure out what they are working on and can help you know what to say and do.



You can add to the play by talking about what is happening: "You made a fort big enough for your brother and you to fit in." "When you are in your fort, I can't see you." Ask simple questions: "How can we build a roof over your fort?" "How can we add light in your hideout?"

PLAY VALUE—PRICE VALUE

Games and projects that use simple, everyday sheets, blankets, and furniture can offer a deeper, more creative play experience for children than many of the expensive, one-purpose toys sold today.



IDEAS FOR WINTERTIME FAMILY PLAY WITH FORTS

BIG AND SMALL FORTS

While they are traditionally called “forts,” you can also call them “hideouts,” “houses,” “caves,” “clubhouses,” or “tents,” too.

Whatever you call them, they are usually

built indoors with furniture (sofas, chairs, tables, cushions) and blankets, sheets, and pillows. Forts or hideouts can be small—a sheet or blanket thrown over a card table—or so big that they are almost room size. They can hold one child or a whole family.



FORT ART

- **Make Signs for Your Fort or Hideout.**

Does your fort have a name? Who can go inside? What are the rules of the hideout?



- **Make Art Projects Inside the Fort.** Stock the fort with paper, markers, scissors, tape, and other art supplies. Let children make whatever they

like and then let them decorate inside the fort with their artwork.



WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY?

Anne Schmidt in *The Benefits of Fort Building* (<http://nspt4kids.com>) says that fort building is good for kids in several ways, including:

- Planning what materials they need.
- Problem solving how to build it.
- Using their imagination
- Teamwork with family and friends.
- Using small spaces for a quiet space to play a game or read.

EXTENDING THE PLAY



- **Choose a Theme for Your Fort or Hideout.** It can become an igloo, a castle, a house, a grocery store, a bear’s cave, a camping tent, or a teepee. Add props and costumes to go with the theme. Read books about the theme.
- **Add Lights.** Give each child a flashlight to light up the inside of the fort.
- **Enjoy a Picnic in the Fort.** Any meal is sure to taste better when eaten in a fort created by family members. Serve your picnic in lunch boxes or lunch bags.

- **Have a Sleepover .** Bring in sleeping bags or make a bed with sheets, blankets, and pillows. Tell stories when the lights are turned out. Children love to hear stories about when their parents were young. Or tell old favorites like “The Three Bears,” “The Three Little Pigs,” or “Red Riding Hood.” Do a family Round Robin story. Start the story with a sentence or two and have each family member add to it.

TRUCE FAMILY PLAY TIP

Develop a family screen turn off ritual.

Here are some ideas:

- **Count all the screens that are on as you turn them off.**
- **See if you can turn off all the screens in a minute or less.**
- **Have a bin or basket where you put all portable screens during family play time.**

