

15 TIPS FOR COMMERCIAL-FREE, FUN-FILLED FAMILY HOLIDAYS

a joint resource from:

NewDream
MORE OF WHAT MATTERS

THE STORY OF
STUFF
PROJECT

so kind
registry
MORE FUN LESS STUFF

ccfc

Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

 **children's screen time
action network**

 **RECLAIM**
your *Holidays*


Teachers Resisting Unhealthy
Children's Entertainment

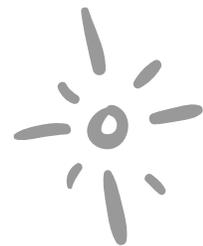
SIMPLICITY PARENTING
... because it is a beautiful world

15 TIPS FOR COMMERCIAL-FREE, FUN-FILLED FAMILY HOLIDAYS

If you want to make this year's holidays more meaningful, memorable, and rejuvenating for your family, these tips will help you opt out of the commercial hype and create a truly special (and sustainable) celebration for your kids. Whether your family includes toddlers, elementary-aged children, or young adults, we have ideas for you. Less stress, less stuff, and way more connection and fun—what's not to love?!

1. CREATE A DIFFERENT KIND OF WISH LIST

Instead of material presents, encourage your children to request gifts of time, skill, experience, and connection—the best goodies any time of year—by making a wish list on New Dream's [SoKind Registry](#). Holiday gifts for kids can include museum memberships, guitar lessons, a contribution toward a special summer camp, and so much more.



2. CHOOSE MEANINGFUL GIFTS

Tickets to a sporting event or puppet show, a weekend camping adventure, gently used (but still fun!) board games, or clothes for a homemade doll or stuffed animal are just a few great gift ideas for children. For tons more fantastic, meaningful gift ideas for kids, browse New Dream's [More Fun, Less Stuff Gift Catalog](#). Also, check out New Dream's full range of Simplify the Holidays resources for even more fun holiday ideas.

3. SELECT TRULY CHILD-FRIENDLY TOYS

The best toys are 90% child, 10% toy. Open-ended toys that encourage creative and active play are best (blocks, dolls, balls, etc.). Leave toys with media characters, batteries, screens, and other “flashy” features on the shelf. And the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (CCFC) says be sure to avoid all internet-connected toys, as they [pose threats](#) to children's privacy, creativity, and well-being.

4. OPT FOR SECOND-HAND TOYS OR PLAY BOXES

Many classic toys can be found at yard or garage sales, or on resale websites. With just a little clean-up, the toy may be as good as new! Or, instead of purchasing toys, consider creating Play Boxes—collections of small, familiar, inexpensive items organized by theme. Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (TRUCE) offers many creative ideas in their new [Play Boxes guide](#), and lots of other tips for healthy, creative play, and family fun in their Toys & Play Guides.



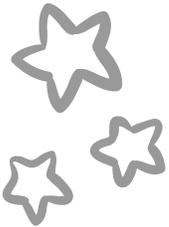
5. TALK TO KIDS ABOUT WHERE OUR STUFF COMES FROM AND WHERE IT GOES

Help kids understand that a toy's life doesn't start on the store shelf, nor end when it breaks and gets tossed in the trash. From the resources that it takes to make our Stuff to the landfills full of yesterday's toys, there are impacts on people and the planet both before and after Stuff comes into our homes. Great for starting conversations with older kids, [The Story of Stuff movie](#) takes a closer look at what toys and other Stuff are made from, where they end up, and the costs they impose on communities and the environment every step of the way.



6. MAKE A FAMILY PLAN FOR YOUR BEST HOLIDAY YET

At dinner or another family meeting time, take this [5-minute assessment](#) from the University of Northern Iowa's Reclaim Your Holidays. It will give you an opportunity to talk together about what you liked and didn't like about last year's holiday. Then, you can use what you learn to outline a holiday season that's just right for your family.



7. SET LIMITS TO PRESERVE ESSENTIAL TIME AND SPACE TO FULLY ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS

Too often around the holidays, calendars become overbooked with events and to-dos, leaving little downtime to truly relax and recharge. And our homes end up overflowing with presents, adding to clutter instead of calm.

Use New Dream's [Simplify the Holidays Calendar](#) to build free time into your holiday schedule, and try using the "Four Gift Rule" (want, need, wear, read) as a fun way to set limits on material gifts in your holiday celebration.

8. PUT DOWN THOSE SCREENS!

Use that extra time off from school and work to savor being together instead of in a constant state of digital distraction. Here's how: Make sure all holiday meals are free of screens. Designate certain days during the holidays—or all of them!—to be screen-free for the entire family. Power down tablets and phones and put them away (research shows that just the presence of a phone distracts from face-to-face conversation). Use the time you gain to cook together, sing, play games, and start new family traditions. *Added bonus:* less screen time = less exposure to ads for holiday toys = less nagging and less making the holidays about "must-have" toys. For loads of tips on unplugging, check out CCFC's [Children's Screen Time Action Network](#).



9. PLAN HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES THAT FOSTER CONNECTION

Plan a slow, simple time with your child exploring a special interest, suggests Simplicity Parenting coach Christine O'Brien. If you have a sky lover, consider a cloud-watching date. Learn about the types of clouds from an inspiring book and go for a walk to take photos or draw pictures of the clouds you see. Or if you've got a fairy fan, use your creativity and tiny found objects to transform a potted plant into a fairy garden! For more ideas and resources, check out [Simplicity Parenting](#).



10. CREATE A "GIVELIST" AND PRIORITIZE GIVING OVER RECEIVING

Flip the idea of a traditional registry or wish list on its head to create a [GiveList](#) on SoKind, where you and your kids offer to share your talents and generosity with family, friends, and neighbors. Does Mateo make a fine volunteer dog walker but doesn't have a dog to walk? Or perhaps Bella would like to teach a younger friend how to play a song on the recorder. You're pretty good with a camera, and family portraits are in high demand! Add these to your GiveLists, and watch community blossom around the holidays.

11. CUSTOMIZE A COUPON BOOK

Use New Dream's [printable coupon book](#) to make a holiday gift for children that's sure to deliver smiles. Some kid favorites include coupons to: "Stay up 15 minutes past bedtime"; "Enjoy dessert BEFORE dinner"; and "Design-a-Day (you choose the activities, we'll all enjoy the fun!)." Because giving feels as good or even better than receiving, encourage kids to create their own coupon books to offer help with folding laundry, a five-minute back massage, or assisting a sibling with toy clean-up duty.

12. GIVE A "SHARE CHECK"

As a holiday present, let kids experience the gift of making a difference. CCFC Board Chair Nathan Dungan suggests [empowering kids to contribute to a cause they're passionate about](#) by giving each child a signed check for a certain amount with the "pay to the order of" line left blank. Let the child fill in the "to" field with a charity of their choice and feel the joy and value of their own giving.



13. GET RELATIVES ON BOARD WITH "LESS IS MORE"

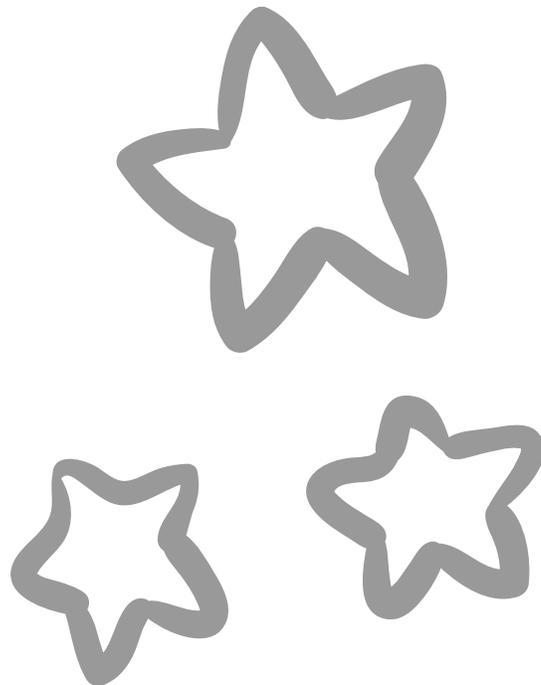
Do you have family members who express love with excessive gift giving? Find ways to set limits and preserve relationships with clear, respectful, assertive communication skills. Avoid blame, stay calm, and be clear. For more details about how to do this, check out Reclaim Your Holidays' tip sheet on [Spoiling Grandkids—How to Express Love Without 'Spoiling.'](#)

14. ASK YOUR KIDS TO CONSIDER IF MORE STUFF MEANS MORE HAPPY

Our economy puts a lot of pressure on kids and families to pursue more Stuff—especially around the holidays. But with a little reflection, we might find that only a few (if any) of the products we want bring real, lasting joy; the rest are quickly forgotten. Great for kids of all ages, The Story of Stuff's short movie, "[Happiness](#)," helps kids explore the question: Does Stuff = Happiness?

15. SPREAD THE JOY!

Share this list of tips for fun, commercial-free family holidays on social media. Send it to your child's classroom teacher or school parent liaison for inclusion in an upcoming newsletter. Share it with a church or community group you belong to. Because all kids and families (and our planet!) can benefit from more fun, less stuff this holiday season.



For more resources to reduce commercialism for children during the holidays and throughout the year, visit:

Campaign for a
Commercial-Free Childhood

Children's Screen Time
Action Network

New Dream

Simplicity Parenting

SoKind Registry

The Story of Stuff Project

Teachers Resisting Unhealthy
Children's Entertainment (TRUCE)

University of Northern Iowa's
Reclaim Your Holidays

This resource, and its included links, can be found at:
www.newdream.org/15tips