



18 Winter Break Activities - one for each day & a few extras!

Parkwood Elementary PTA Newsletter Insert, November 2010

“**Mom, what are we going to do?!...**” is heard across the country during winter breaks. Winter break is much shorter than the summer break, but for many parents, it feels like the longer of the two breaks. Being cooped up in the house can make parents and children crazy after a few days let alone weeks on end.



Here are 18 ideas for you and your children to help you survive the long winter days without blowing your budget or losing your sanity.

1. **Set up a scavenger hunt.** Hide “treasures” under beds and inside closets (or outside!). Make a map or write out hints of where to find things (for pre-readers use images). At zero cost...this activity is big on fun.
2. **Clean the toy room.** This activity makes space for new treats which were received over the holidays and allows your kids to “find” toys they had forgotten/lost. Also, it is a good time to make a bag of gently-used-grown-out-of-toys to give to a children’s charity.
3. **Snack patrol.** Have the kids (with your supervision) bake or create snack. Kids love to pull a chair up to the counter and measure, sift and stir. It is also a “teachable moment” where readers can read recipes and measure ingredients. Not only a boredom buster making snack is yummy.
4. **Shopping list.** Like snack patrol...shopping for food can be a family-friendly activity. Give the kids a small list and supervise them doing the shopping. Make sure each child has its own separate list (because kids shouldn’t fight over who gets the bananas).
5. **Host a play date.** Invite a friend to come play. Perhaps set up a childcare switch where the friend comes to you today and your child goes to the friend’s house another day.
6. **Book appointments.** Many businesses still have office hours during winter break so why not use the time to visit the dentist, doctor or hair cutters?
7. **Enjoy a family field trip.** Take an afternoon to visit a museum, the zoo or another family-friendly destination.
8. **Par-tay!** Throw on your favorite dance music and have a dance party in the living room. Dancing is a great stress reliever and movement activity. It is just the right thing to shake off the winter blahs.
9. **Have a beach day in the middle of winter.** What could be more fun than a little beach music, drinks with little umbrellas, a big beach ball, and beach chairs? Dress in your swimsuits (if you dare) and toss around the beach ball.



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10. **Make some art.** Art is an important open-ended activity where kids can just create. Make a cardboard box into a space ship. Finger paint to music. Put food coloring in spray bottles and make snow art outside. Check out: www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/winter/ and www.familyfun.com for craft ideas.

11. **Do something for others each day.** Have the kids help shovel an elderly neighbor's driveway. Take lunch to Grandma's house. Volunteer to help – as a family – at a local charity.

12. **Have your kids create a journal about their winter break.** They can draw artwork, create articles, and conduct interviews. This will be a fun memory and a great 'show and share' when going back to school.

13. **Have an indoor picnic with your children.** Spread out a blanket and pack a basket of your favorite picnic foods. Take this time to chat about what you miss most about the summer and what you look forward in the spring.

14. **Have a family night playing your board games.** Offer a grab bag of prizes or let the winner give up their chores for the day.

15. **Go to a Public Library,** pick out a book and/or a movie and organize a book/movie night at your home. If you can handle more than your own children, invite other kids for a sleepover.

16. **Play outside with your kids** and discover one of our great Shoreline or Seattle parks each day. Remember: There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing!

17. **Find a pen pal for your child.** www.ks-connection.org/ is a website that is devoted towards providing children and schoolteachers pen pals from all over the world.

18. **Organize an indoor soccer match with balloons.** It's amazing how much energy you can release by doing this... and your furniture will survive.

19. **Add your own ideas...**

With these ideas, winter does not have to be a bore. And remember: Some days it's good to do nothing. Just hang out. Play. Chill out. Kids have to learn to be with themselves in our over-scheduled world. Other days, it's good to have a plan to make the day go by faster. Make sure to involve your kids in the planning process and tell them what your guidelines are (e.g. low cost activities; ...). We hope with these tips in mind your break will fly by and the time spent with your children is treasured.