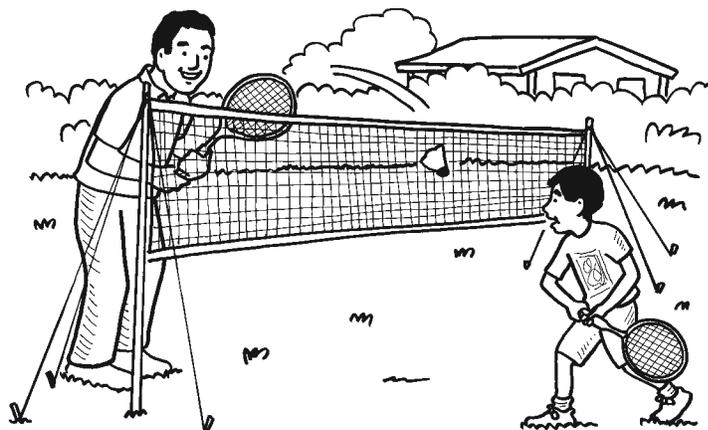


Power Up! Power Down!

Screens may be everywhere these days, but that doesn't mean your child needs one to have fun! In fact, your youngster can have even more fun—and stay healthier—by powering down the screens and powering up the physical activity. Here's how.



Tip #1: Keep a log

With this poster, family members will see at a glance how much time they spend being active vs. in front of a screen. Let your child divide a poster board into two columns: "Active time" and "Screen time." For every 15 minutes a family member does something like badminton or yoga, he can draw a picture in the first column (birdie, yoga pose). And for every 15 minutes spent on a screen, he should draw the device used (TV, laptop, video game, smartphone) in the second column. Help your youngster tally up your totals once a week. If your family had more screen time than active time, aim to improve by at least 15 minutes the following week.

Tip #2: Promote playtime

Encourage your child to play actively for at least 60 minutes every day. Chances are she'll get so caught up in playing, she'll forget all about screens. Try this: Make a "play door." You and your youngster could write ideas for active play on sticky notes ("fly a kite," "juggle balls"). Place these notes on her bedroom door or inside the front door. When she has free time, she can pick an activity—or think of a new one to add.

Tip #3: Find your niche

Your child can't play a video game if he's climbing an indoor rock wall or tumbling across a mat! Give him healthy ways to

use his time by letting him take a class or join a team. Check out classes and groups at community centers, after-school programs, or places of worship. He can try various activities until he finds ones he likes. He might decide on rock climbing, running, gymnastics, or even pickleball.

Tip #4: Fill a "TV basket"

Keep a basket of your youngster's toys near the TV. Then, instead of watching shows, she gets to play with something from the basket. Switch up the contents each week to keep things interesting. Include a Twister game, a jump rope, or a library book of children's poems to act out, for instance.



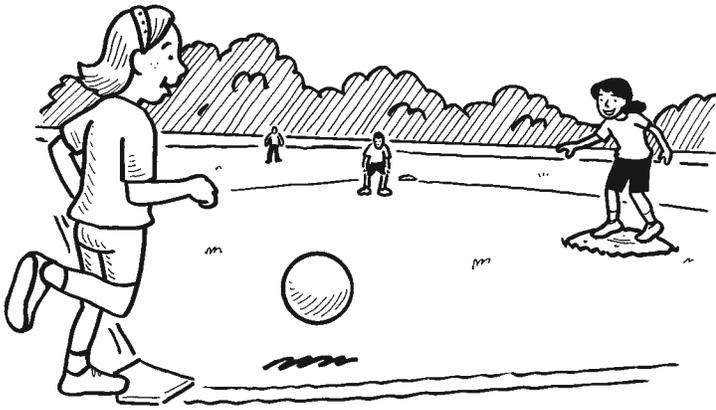
Active alternatives

Here are 10 quick, easy, and screen-free activities your youngster can enjoy indoors or outdoors.

1. Form a marching band with toy instruments (or pots, pans, and wooden spoons).
2. Play leapfrog.
3. See which foot you can balance on the longest.
4. Form a conga line—stand in a row, hold onto the shoulders of the person in front of you, and "snake" through the house or yard.



5. Make up and perform cheers.
6. Hold a limbo contest.
7. Tape down a long piece of yarn as a "tightrope," and walk on it.
8. Do the hokey-pokey.
9. Have an egg-and-spoon relay race—hard-boil the eggs first!
10. Play hopscotch.



Tip #5: Start a club

Suggest that your child launch a “Fitness Club” with her friends. Members should agree on a time to meet and take turns hosting. Each week’s host gets to choose the activity. One week they might play follow the leader through a sprinkler, while another week they could organize a kickball game. *Idea:* Mix things up by offering to take them on field trips for activities they haven’t tried—say, to play volleyball at a sand volleyball pit in the park.

Tip #6: Enjoy the outdoors

There’s so much to discover outside. Look for active ways to enjoy nature together. For instance, your youngster could take a blank notebook on a family walk and draw pictures of the trees and plants. Or you might ride bikes on a path you haven’t explored before. Gardening is good exercise, too—and you’ll boost your family’s health even more by eating the vegetables and herbs you and your child grow.



Tip #7: Be the star

Challenge your youngster to develop her own active versions of favorite TV shows or video games. If she enjoys a reality dance program, she and her friends might put on music and make up dance routines. Or if she likes a video game with an obstacle course, she could set up her own course in the backyard to race over, under, around, and through with friends.

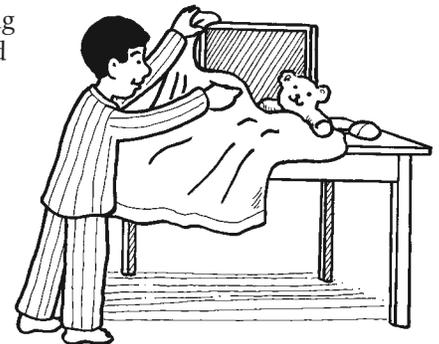
Tip #8: Volunteer to help others

Look for a place in your community where you can volunteer as a family. Check the parks and recreation department and your local United Way for active ideas. Perhaps you’ll find a playground cleanup day or a trail-clearing event. Or train for a “fun run” or a 5K to support a good cause. Another idea is to help neighbors in need, perhaps ones who are older, have new babies, or are ill. You could offer to do yardwork, wash cars, or walk dogs.

Give screens a break

It’s easier to avoid watching TV or using your phone if you plan ahead. Consider these ways to manage screen time for the whole family:

- Set a “screen bedtime” at least an hour before your youngster’s bedtime. Your child may enjoy “tucking in” the TV or computer for the night by covering it with a blanket and placing a stuffed animal beside it.
- Keep TVs and other devices out of your youngster’s bedroom. He’ll have less screen time, and it’ll be easier for you to supervise his activities.
- Switch off computers, video game systems, and TVs when you’re not using them. After your family watches a show, turn off the TV rather than channel surfing to find more programs. And if your laptop is off, you’ll be less tempted to constantly check work email or social networks.
- Turn your car into a screen-free zone. Make a point of showing your child how you put your phone in your bag or glove compartment before you start the car. Then, enjoy time together by talking about the scenery, counting cars of a specific color, or singing songs.



Editor’s Note: Nutrition Nuggets™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

Nutrition Nuggets™

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