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Fun with Children: Making Memories on a Budget

By Nicole Dean

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What childhood memories do you hold dear? For me, it was all the times "life happened". The little things like playing outside, riding my bike with the wind in my hair, playing at the park, swimming in the lakes, giggling with friends. None of those moments cost a cent, yet they are some of my most treasured memories.

Making memories on a budget is very easy to do. Choose any of the ideas below and you'll have a fun-filled time without breaking the bank!

Garden – Plant flowers, fruit trees, herbs, or vegetables. Your child will learn science, responsibility and have fun!

Snip-it – Give your child old toy catalogs or magazines and safe scissors. Watch them cut all day.

Diggin' It – Send your child outside with a bucket and small shovel. Shoveling snow, sand, dirt or rocks --- it's all good fun.

Sing – Turn up the radio and sing! Teach your child the music of the 70s, 80s, or 90s.

Play Catch – Throw different items (balloons, tennis balls) to your child. Roll balls to young children.

Sidewalk Chalk – Lay on the sidewalk and take turns outlining each other. Decorate your flat selves.

Cardboard Boxes – Make towers, build cities, design play houses, airplanes, trains, forts and more!

Bubbles – Blow Bubbles. Take turns chasing and popping them.

Masks – Create Masks from Paper bags, paper plates, foam, or anything on hand.

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Cards – Introduce your child to all the classic games -- UNO, Crazy 8, Go Fish, Old Maid, Memory Match.

Scavenger Hunt – Give your child a list of clues and send him out to find them. Clues can be simple (find a rock) or very advanced (find a piece of granite).

Throw Rocks – Go to a pond, creek, or lake and throw rocks. Try to skip them or aim for different targets.

Bath Time – Bring kitchen utensils into the bath tub. Bubbles and water can become an imaginary gourmet dinner.

Office – Give your child Junk Mail, stickers, a calculator and pen -- they'll have their own office!

Photography – Let your child use a disposable camera or a digital camera and witness their creativity.

Picnic – Make some sandwiches and eat them outside.

Cooking – Find age-appropriate recipes and let your child help in the kitchen.

Tag – How many versions of tag do you remember from your childhood? Teach the oldies to your children (freeze tag, TV tag, etc.)

Write a Story – Younger children can write wiggle-worm sentences (much scribbling and pictures). Encourage older children to write chapter books -- your child may surprise you.

Charades – Toddlers can act out and guess their favorite animals (usually with many sound effects). Older children will enjoy acting out movie titles.

Flashlight – Turn off the lights & make shadow puppets. Or get two flashlights and chase the light beams.

Wildlife – Feed the ducks, squirrels, birds, turtles or fish near you.

Abundance – Every day, have your children tell you what they are thankful for.

Dress Up – Give your children your clothes and watch them imitate you.

Treats – Make cookies and decorate them.

Dance – Turn up the music and Dance!

Play Games – Teach your child all your favorite board games.

Journal – Present a notebook or diary to your child and encourage them to express their feelings with

pictures and words.

Tea Party – Grab the stuffed animals and treat them to a delicious cup of imaginary tea.

Keep in Touch – Write a letter to Grandparents, Aunts or Uncles. Teach the importance of family.

I Spy – Come up with age-appropriate clues and let your child guess what you are thinking.

Be sure to print out this list and keep it handy for the next time your children say

"MOMMMMMM --- we're bored!"

*This article may be edited for length*About the Author: Nicole Dean is a mom whose life centers

around exposing her children to all the wonders of the world. She is the owner of www.showmomthemoney.com – a fun site for Moms and Work at Home Moms! (<http://www.showmomthemoney.com>)

Five Inexpensive Ways to Help Your Children Invest in Holiday Memories.

By Pamela Cole Harris

Christmas memories are never dependent on the amount of money spent or the popularity of the toy. Memories are made up of amount of heart invested and given. This year, let your children invest their time and hearts in making Christmas memories for your family.

1. Buy white or red placemats and let your children create their own artwork with fabric crayons. A placemat can be made for each guest at Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner. Your children will feel an important part of the festivities.
2. Make paper angels and have your children write short messages to each family member stating the things about that person for which they are thankful. Your children will have an opportunity to think beyond the commercialism of the day to appreciate the blessings they already have.
3. Start a cookie exchange among the neighborhood children. Your children can make a dozen cookies for each family in the neighborhood and deliver them wrapped in a colored tin. They can then sit back and wait to see the kind of cookie surprises come to their door!
4. Allow your children to make this year's Christmas cards. Simply buy blank cards at your favorite office supply store and let your children loose with magic markers. They can even compose a poem

and message for each recipient.

5. Have your children come up with small tasks they can easily do – like taking out the trash. They can then write those tasks on plain paper angels they make themselves. Have them deliver the angels to elderly neighbors as a gift of sharing for the holiday season. Learning to give the gift of themselves can be the most valuable memory of the season!

Let your children become a vital part of the planning of the holiday season and not simply receivers of gifts. It will help them understand that giving can be as much fun (and more rewarding!) as receiving. And their memories of this holiday season may set a lifelong pattern - which may be the best holiday present of all!

Pamela Cole Harris is an editor and writer with 35 years experience. Visit her website,

, for her unique view of home decorating and remodeling

(and a free monthly newsletter!). Or for original content unique to your website, written especially for your keywords and your audience, visit

Five Inexpensive Ways to Help Your Children Invest in Holiday Memories.

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