

SCREENSTRONG'S

# UNPLUG & PLAY

## ULTIMATE GIFT GUIDE

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12 Ways to Rethink Gift Giving, Reclaim Your  
Kids, & Reconnect Your Family



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Introduction

The Gift of Art

The Gift of Music

The Gift of Sports, Coordination & Recreation

The Gift of Creativity & Imaginative Hobbies

The Gift of Strategy & Family Competition

The Gift of Reading

The Gift of Fashion & Accessories

The Gift of Companionship

The Gift of Outdoor Play

The Gift of Family Fun & Attachment

The Gifts of Acts of Service

The Gift of Your Time

# INTRODUCTION

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Childhood is such an important time to make life-long memories and form bonds that will keep families close for years to come. That's why one of the most valuable gifts you can give your child is the gift of a video game and a smartphone-free childhood!

At ScreenStrong, we encourage families to keep the benefits of technology but delay the harm. Being ScreenStrong means hitting the pause button on addictive screens (video games, social media, and smartphones). It also means thinking beyond electronic devices when it comes to gift-giving.

While screens may top your child's wish list, resist the urge to give in. Give meaningful gifts that will empower your children and expand their minds. Gift-giving is an opportunity to share gifts with our children that will become blessings. This gift-giving season, challenge yourself to think outside the high-tech norm and give gifts that inspire, engage, and educate your child.

And so, we offer you 12 non-tech gift categories that will help you rethink gift-giving, reclaim your kids, and reconnect your family.

Happy gifting!

***The ScreenStrong Team***

# THE GIFT OF ART



ART is a perfect gift for children of any age or gender

Young minds are meant to explore shapes, colors, textures, space, and values. Art provides a necessary medium where kids can color outside the lines, experiment with new ideas, not be confined to right and wrong, see that problems have more than one solution, and allow their imagination to flourish while leaving their unique and colorful mark on the world.

Do you think your child isn't an artist? Think again! Everyone is an artist when they have the right tools. The human brain is designed to create, and it is creativity that allows all the parts of the brain to work well together. Exploring art will allow your child to experience increased success in other areas of his world.

Quiet space is needed for creativity to be born, but screen use has trained children's minds to be uncomfortable with the solitude needed for creativity. Screen use involuntarily activates the fight/flight mode of the limbic system. This hyper-activated state causes children to find boredom and a lack of stimulation uncomfortable. Technology interruptions such as smartphones, computers, and video games keep all of us from finding chunks of time needed for creative juices to flow.

Time and patience are needed for creativity. TV, video games, and smartphones are passive, mind-numbing activities that squelch the sparks of original ideas. It is hard to be motivated to create when low-effort entertainment is calling.

Kids need confidence. When your child is on a video game (or phone), he is experiencing another person's art and creativity, not his own (even in Minecraft). He needs to experience what it is like to create something with his own hands/mind and not piggyback on what someone else has created.

Try different mediums until you find one your child enjoys. There are so many to choose from. My family didn't think we had an artist until the day our son discovered clay!



# ART GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Art lessons
- ◆ Sketch books
- ◆ Sketch pencil set
- ◆ Drawing how to book
- ◆ Paints
- ◆ Canvas, paints, brushes
- ◆ Watercolors and paper
- ◆ Pastels
- ◆ Modeling clay
- ◆ Pottery supplies
- ◆ Pottery classes
- ◆ Play-dough/Kinetic sand
- ◆ Stickers
- ◆ Pipe cleaners
- ◆ Craft supplies
- ◆ Light board for tracing
- ◆ Crayons
- ◆ Model Magic
- ◆ Duct tape
- ◆ Markers
- ◆ Glitter
- ◆ Glue
- ◆ Transparent contact paper
- ◆ Sidewalk chalk
- ◆ Wood burning tools
- ◆ Origami
- ◆ Beads & jewelry supplies
- ◆ Paper crafting
- ◆ Card making
- ◆ Scrapbooking supplies
- ◆ Origami paper

# THE GIFT OF MUSIC



The gift of music is perfect for children of any age—whether it's instruments, lessons, a child's first guitar, or even drums! Music makes everything more fun, including cleaning your room and shooting hoops in the driveway. It is soothing for the soul and essential for brain development, as music triggers areas of the brain few other activities can reach.

Play it often in your home and make music a part of your child's (and your) daily routine.

Here are a few reasons why music rocks:

**Mental advantage:** Music makes kids smarter. It stimulates the parts of the brain related to reading, math, and emotional development. Many studies indicate that music education at an early age strengthens brain pathways for verbal and visual skills. So, start young!

**Improved memory:** Certain brain patterns grow memory connections that are strengthened with exposure to music.

**Develops confidence and patience:** Learning a difficult music piece is thrilling. After much practice, the sense of accomplishment boosts confidence in other areas of life as well. You can't fake a piano recital; you get exactly what you put into it.

**Builds discipline:** Discipline is not a natural trait, nor is it easy to learn. But music provides a fun way to develop it.

**Music is relaxing and satisfies the need to unwind:** Much more beneficial than stimulating screens, music offers a balanced experience of creativity, calm, and connection. It also makes us happy and is good for our health. Playing and creating music with others or in a group takes it to the next level, offering rich social experiences.

Dig out your favorite music and have it playing when the kids get home today.

*Mild warning:* music leads to dancing and singing in the kitchen—and other fun family memories! (Even for the big kiddos who act like they don't like it!)

Don't underestimate the peaceful and dynamic effect music can have on your home. You could open this extraordinary door for your family. Set the mood and set them on track for a lifetime of music appreciation and enjoyment.

# MUSIC GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Guitar or another instrument—Drums (maybe!)
- ◆ Music Lessons
- ◆ Encouragement to start a garage band!
- ◆ Music/alarm clock for room
- ◆ Small portable speakers for room and to take outside
- ◆ Headphones (with cute cases for girls and sturdy)
- ◆ Headphones for boys to wear while shooting hoops!)
- ◆ Vintage record player with records to start a collection
- ◆ Music Accessories (i.e., guitar strap, music stand, etc.)
- ◆ Karaoke machine

# THE GIFT OF SPORTS, COORDINATION & RECREATION



Your child was born to move! From the moment they take their first steps, movement is a vital part of their development. While they don't need to excel at every sport or win every game, physical activity is crucial for their growth, both mentally and physically. Research shows that regular movement helps the brain develop properly, boosting cognitive functions like focus, memory, and emotional regulation. It also promotes healthy physical development, builds strength, and fosters resilience.

Unfortunately, in today's world, technology overuse has become a major obstacle to movement. Kids are spending more time in front of screens, which often leads to sedentary behavior and reduces opportunities for physical play. The temptation to sit and watch TV or play video games is strong, but it's important to recognize that these habits can limit a child's physical activity and hinder their overall development. The ease of screen time makes it the default go-to for many kids, but it's our job to help them find balance.

While organized sports offer wonderful benefits—teaching discipline, teamwork, and social skills—they're not the only way to keep kids active. Free play is just as, if not more, important. Through unstructured play, children develop creativity, problem-solving skills, and emotional resilience. Not every child is drawn to competitive sports, and that's okay! What matters is finding an activity that encourages movement without the pressure of competition. Think about activities like swimming, biking, hiking, dancing, or even just playing tag in the backyard. These types of non-competitive activities allow kids to explore their own interests and physical capabilities, building confidence and independence along the way.

One simple but crucial fact is that it's impossible to be deeply engaged in physical movement and absorbed in a screen at the same time. The more time spent with screens, the less time they have to run, jump, or simply be outside exploring. By unplugging, you can help your child discover a new athletic or recreational interest that will not only keep them active but also promote long-term health and well-being.

As parents, it's essential to prioritize movement in our children's lives, and one of the best ways to do this is through the gifts we give them. Instead of focusing on technology-based presents, consider giving items that encourage physical activity—like a new bike, a soccer ball, a skateboard, or even a set of jump ropes. Keep movement and coordination activities at the forefront of your gift-giving, making it easy for your child to stay active year-round. These gifts aren't just fun; they're investments in your child's health, confidence, and future.

By fostering an active lifestyle and encouraging physical play, you're not only helping your child develop a love for movement but also setting them up for a lifetime of good health. So, let's help our kids unplug, move, and explore the world around them in ways that screens simply can't offer.



# SPORTS, COORDINATION & RECREATION GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Basketball hoop (indoor or outdoor)
- ◆ Soccer ball
- ◆ Bag of baseballs
- ◆ Nerf footballs
- ◆ Whiffle balls
- ◆ Handballs
- ◆ Tennis balls
- ◆ Golf balls
- ◆ Ping pong balls
- ◆ Four square ball
- ◆ Sporting equipment
- ◆ Baseball bats
- ◆ Frisbee
- ◆ Soccer equipment
- ◆ Archery lessons
- ◆ Hacky Sack
- ◆ Dartboard
- ◆ Indo Board
- ◆ Hula Hoop
- ◆ Jump rope
- ◆ Pogo sticks
- ◆ RipStik
- ◆ Long Board (skateboard)
- ◆ Helmet, knee pads
- ◆ Disk golf case with disks
- ◆ Tickets to a trampoline park
- ◆ Inline skate
- ◆ Ice skates
- ◆ Dance lessons
- ◆ Dance attire
- ◆ Bike
- ◆ Scooters
- ◆ Wagons
- ◆ Trampoline
- ◆ Ping pong table
- ◆ Retractable ping pong set for any table
- ◆ Cup stacking
- ◆ Table hockey
- ◆ Bocce ball set
- ◆ Tetherball
- ◆ Badminton
- ◆ Croquet
- ◆ Volleyball net
- ◆ Street hockey goals and nets
- ◆ Snow skis
- ◆ Sleds
- ◆ Water skis
- ◆ Pitching machine
- ◆ Amusement park annual membership
- ◆ Transform a space for a home gym (basement/garage)

# THE GIFT OF CREATIVITY & IMAGINATIVE HOBBIES



We all know that our kids need to be well-rounded; they can't eat cupcakes for dinner every night, and similarly, they should not play with technology all day. Children should have at least three other hobbies that they enjoy as much as technology to move toward a balanced, brain-healthy childhood.

Some food for thought: organized sports for children are not necessarily a hobby. It is great recreation and exercise and good for many developmental milestones, but a true hobby is set at your own relaxed pace with your own rules and exploration. It is not necessarily an organized, scheduled activity. We all need activities and interests in our lives to find rest, relaxation, and joy in doing.

## **Why your child needs a hobby:**

- Hobbies are educational. For example, rocketry is a very popular hobby. Think of all the things he will learn.
- Hobbies teach goal setting. Searching for a special baseball card, building model airplanes, or knitting baby blankets for the nursery at the hospital all require goal setting.
- Hobbies teach problem-solving and overcoming obstacles. o Hobbies get creative juices flowing, activating the whole brain rather than one pathway.
- Kids develop talents and skills that can lead to a career or lifetime hobby.
- Hobbies lead to unlimited life experiences, innovation, social opportunities, and independence.

## **What your child needs to develop a hobby:**

- Spare time and plenty of it. This is empty time to focus without the distraction of screen time. It is also not necessarily a scheduled activity.
- Space. Find a place for her to spread out to do his hobby and leave it out, such as a card table in his room, den, or kitchen. She will want to be where the action is.
- She needs parents who are leading by example with their own interesting hobbies. Parents who make hobbies a regular part of their lives have kids who do the same.
- Encouragement. Don't criticize or get your child started on a hobby that is too difficult; early success is the key to not giving up.

Think of things that your child can create, collect, or do using his own imagination and ideas. He needs a hobby besides his video games, and she needs a hobby besides social media. Working toward a goal of collecting trains, baseball cards, and stamps or learning to cook, sew, and make jewelry can provide a lifetime of enjoyment, friends, and recreation for your child. However, the key is to introduce hobbies at an early age to allow a love to be fostered that will last into adulthood. Take your child to a hobby store to get some ideas, and don't get discouraged. Just keep looking until something that sparks their interest is found.

# CREATIVITY & IMAGINATIVE HOBBIES GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Cooking supplies, personalized apron
- ◆ Fishing supplies
- ◆ DSLR camera, photography how-to books
- ◆ Film camera with rolls of 35 mm film
- ◆ Gift card to develop film
- ◆ Darkroom kit for Film developing
- ◆ Polaroid camera and film
- ◆ Baseball cards
- ◆ Coins starter collection
- ◆ Scrapbooking supplies
- ◆ Legos
- ◆ Citi Blocs
- ◆ Train set
- ◆ Snap circuits
- ◆ Sewing Machine
- ◆ Knitting/crocheting, Potholder kits
- ◆ Dress up, costumes
- ◆ Model airplanes, ships, etc.
- ◆ Tools, toolbox, scrap wood
- ◆ Workbench for the garage
- ◆ Rocketry
- ◆ Robotic clubs
- ◆ Growing a garden or specialty plant
- ◆ Jewelry making supplies
- ◆ Subscription boxes
- ◆ Tinker Toys



# THE GIFT OF STRATEGY & FAMILY COMPETITION



Every child needs to be challenged. When you give the gift of strategy, you are giving a gift that will pay off huge dividends later in the workplace and everyday life. Strategy games can be done alone (think Rubik's Cube) or with another player (Chess, Risk). They are not about the roll-of-the-dice; rather, they teach the art of planning an action to reach a certain outcome. Teaching your child strategy while having fun is a win-win.

Keep strategy games handy, out on the coffee table year-round. We keep a puzzle out year-round in our den; it is one of the best technology replacement tools we've ever employed!

The ThinkFun games are another must-have for kids who need a good challenge. Plus, they are portable, easy to throw in your bag or car, and easy to do anywhere (instead of depending on a screen to entertain your child at the doctor's office or in a restaurant).

## Why brain fitness games are great for your child:

- They give the brain a healthy workout. Exercising reasoning and problem-solving muscles is very beneficial for your child.
- They are designed to challenge your child, clear his mind, speed up thinking, and improve memory.
- More brain pathways are used with 3D play, where your child can actually hold and manipulate the pieces, than in digital games.
- Explaining their tactics and why they did what they did to solve the game or puzzle requires higher-level thinking skills. Be sure to ask them.

## Family Games

Spending time together playing board games, reading books, or even playing hide and seek builds healthy attachments that will last a lifetime. In short, family board games give your child a chance to practice life in a very safe, fun environment, and they give you a chance to teach valuable life lessons. Since the average parent spends only four minutes a week in meaningful conversation with their child, seeking out non-tech opportunities to talk with our kids is a must. Setting up a board game may be just the ticket for encouraging easy, more natural communication in your home.

So, close your laptop, put down your phone, and open a board game today. Your kids will care more that you spent some time with them, and your work can wait another day. Keep a deck of cards on your kitchen table and always be ready to fit in a quick game of crazy eights or have a solitaire game set up for him when he walks in the door from school. Give your child the gift of spending time together with you in the nooks and crannies of your busy day.

Board games teach your child how to:

- |                         |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Follow rules          | • Learn from experience | • Manage boundaries       |
| • Focus                 | • Use social skills     | • Interact with others    |
| • Regulate self-control | • Be patience           | • Communicate             |
| • Detect patterns       | • Take turns            | • Lengthen attention span |
| • Predict outcomes      | • Manage boundaries     | • Never give up           |
| • Plan ahead            | • Be a good sport       | • How to work as a team   |



# STRATEGY & FAMILY COMPETITION GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Rubik's Cube
- ◆ Ticket to Ride
- ◆ Settlers of Catan
- ◆ Amaze
- ◆ Blokus
- ◆ No Stress Chess
- ◆ Backgammon
- ◆ Clue
- ◆ Carcassonne
- ◆ Labyrinth
- ◆ Escape Room
- ◆ American Trivia
- ◆ Scrabble
- ◆ Bananagrams
- ◆ Ticket to Ride
- ◆ Settlers of Catan
- ◆ Pictionary
- ◆ Trouble
- ◆ Checkers/Chess
- ◆ Monopoly
- ◆ Risk
- ◆ Jenga
- ◆ Uno, Uno Flip
- ◆ Stratego
- ◆ Sequence
- ◆ All puzzles
- ◆ Sudoku books, Crossword puzzle books
- ◆ Legos
- ◆ Card games
- ◆ Kanoodle
- ◆ Escape Room Gift Certificate
- ◆ Clue
- ◆ Apples to Apples
- ◆ Sorry
- ◆ Life
- ◆ Backgammon
- ◆ Rummy
- ◆ Stare
- ◆ Speak Out
- ◆ Dutch Blitz
- ◆ Heads Up!
- ◆ Indoor Scavenger hunt (parent created)
- ◆ Telestrations
- ◆ ThinkFun games ([thinkfun.com](http://thinkfun.com)), Rush Hour, Shape by Shape, Block by Block, etc.

# THE GIFT OF READING



Reading is one of the best gifts you can give your child. Teaching your child to love reading is priceless. Your child will never be lonely with a good book, and they will learn to use their imagination as they travel to faraway places without even leaving their own room. Deeper empathy will be developed by living vicariously through characters. It is said that there are two influences that have the greatest impact on who we become as a person: who we hang around with and what we read. Reading rich, well-crafted stories is essential to your child's mental and emotional development. It has also been said that all great leaders are readers.

Real paper books are better than screen readers. Make hot chocolate and sit down for some non-tech, one-on-one reading with your child. Try reading a book as a family for a few minutes in the evenings, and don't be surprised when your child gets hooked on the storyline and asks you to read more. If you spend time reading with them, chances are they will grow to develop good reading habits. I talk with many moms of boys who struggle with reading; the boys give up when reading seems difficult. Some children just need help getting started.

Remember, your child wants time with you more than anything. Ask them what they would write about if they were writing their own book; this could give you an idea of what books interest them. If your child is hyperactive, reading will do wonders. After just seven minutes, his brain will transition, and he will calm down. If you incorporate physical touch with reading, it's even better (sitting on your lap or sitting on a couch with another child). Get that hot chocolate, grab a book, and relax with your child.

## Here are some tips:

- Keep looking for topics that interest your child.
- Go to the library and browse. Get him a library card and go to the library regularly.
- Read a book together as a family.
- Read out loud to your kids even when they are teens because modeling good reading expression and understanding of punctuation will improve their individual reading levels.
- Make it a routine for them to read before bed. Books calm the brain, making it easier to go to sleep, while screens stimulate, making it more difficult to fall asleep.
- Get magazine subscriptions for them.
- Bring books in the car for errands and trips.
- Talk with them about the books they are reading and read them too.
- Listen to books on tape together in the car, especially on road trips or at home.
- Have his best friend read the same book so they can discuss it.
- Join a book club. Start a book club!
- Create a comfy, inviting, well-lit reading nook in a quiet corner of the house.
- Display books with covers facing out rather than stacked on a shelf.
- Let them find you reading a book of your own in your downtime.
- Make a favorite family story into a book. Or have your child write and illustrate her own book.

# READING GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Books & book series (like Who Was books)
- ◆ Magazine subscriptions
- ◆ Booklight
- ◆ Clip-on light for bed
- ◆ Bookmarks
- ◆ Audiobooks
- ◆ Headphones
- ◆ Blank books for your child to write a story
- ◆ Library card
- ◆ Box of office supplies (tape, Post-it notes, etc.)
- ◆ Diary/journals
- ◆ Calligraphy pen set and how-to book
- ◆ Lap desk
- ◆ Supplies to write letters, poems, and stories
- ◆ Stationery with name, stamps, and address book
- ◆ Gift card to a used bookstore
- ◆ Madlibs



# THE GIFT OF FASHION & ACCESSORIES



Most kids might not get overly excited about receiving practical gifts like new underwear or robes, but there are plenty of clothing and accessory items that can make for highly coveted presents. For instance, many kids love receiving team jerseys, college logo apparel, or athletic wear that lets them show off their favorite teams and school pride. Items like athletic socks, graphic t-shirts, jackets, boots, and cozy sweaters also rank high on many kids' wish lists—especially when they feature cool designs or brands that reflect their personal interests.

Beyond apparel, there are other clothing-related gifts that are equally exciting. Blankets, especially those with their favorite characters, sports teams, or colors, can be an immediate hit. Personalized room décor, such as custom wall art, name signs, or comfy throw pillows, lets kids create a space that's uniquely theirs.

For younger kids, don't underestimate the excitement of receiving a superhero costume or a dress-up outfit that lets them become their favorite character. These gifts provide endless hours of imaginative play and let kids immerse themselves in worlds of adventure. Likewise, for the young ladies in your life, nice jewelry—whether it's a bracelet, necklace, or a set of cute rings—can make them feel special and grown-up.

To add an extra personal touch to any of these gifts, consider monogramming. Whether it's on a hoodie, a tote bag, or a piece of jewelry, personalized items carry a sense of uniqueness and thoughtfulness that can elevate the gift-giving experience. A monogrammed gift makes it clear that you've put thought into selecting something just for them, adding a personal connection to even the simplest item.



# FASHION & ACCESSORIES GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Clothes
- ◆ Athletic socks
- ◆ Sports jerseys
- ◆ Shoes
- ◆ Coats
- ◆ Jewelry
- ◆ Purses
- ◆ Sunglasses with case
- ◆ Money clip
- ◆ Hair bows
- ◆ PJs
- ◆ Slippers
- ◆ Scarf
- ◆ Hat
- ◆ Bathrobe
- ◆ Toiletries (bubble bath, scented lotion, soap, etc.)
- ◆ Magnets & accessories for lockers
- ◆ Vinyl team logos/pictures for bedroom wall

# THE GIFT OF COMPANIONSHIP



Pets are a wonderful addition to any family. Research reveals that raising children with pets has many benefits. Pets provide hours of entertainment and tons of love for your kids. Dogs and cats especially provide a daily lesson in what unconditional love looks like and the added bonus of the responsibility of caring for another living thing.

**There are many benefits to welcoming a pet into your home:**

- Teaches responsibility
- Lowers stress and anxiety
- Teaches values
- Builds self-esteem
- Provides friendship
- Gives love

Families with tech overuse and addiction may observe that a new pet will provide a natural diversion to get the child outside playing with or walking the dog. Many gamers are very lonely and isolated; a pet can offer playful, relaxing companionship. Remember that very young children may have a hard time being nice and not hurting the pet (because their empathy is not developed). This is normal for their cognitive development. You will have to evaluate their maturity and supervise them. While getting a pet is a big decision, it is at the top of the best gift ever list! Before deciding, be sure to consider your family's needs and choose a pet that will match your time and energy.

## COMPANIONSHIP GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Cat
- ◆ Dog
- ◆ Dog training classes
- ◆ Parakeet
- ◆ Horseback riding lessons
- ◆ Chickens

While we generally refrain from recommending caged animals, such as hamsters & bunnies, we do acknowledge that they can also make enjoyable and rewarding pets when cared for responsibly.

# THE GIFT OF OUTDOOR PLAY



## The Gift of Outdoor Play: Why It Matters

Outdoor play is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children. It fosters creativity, physical health, and emotional resilience in ways that no screen or gadget ever could. When kids spend time outside, they engage their senses, explore their surroundings, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Climbing trees, riding bikes, and building forts spark imagination and teach children to take healthy risks, helping them build confidence and independence.

Nature also offers unmatched benefits for mental health. Studies have shown that outdoor play reduces stress, improves focus, and enhances mood in children. In a world where kids are increasingly tethered to screens, getting outdoors provides a necessary reset, allowing them to experience the simple joys of sunlight on their faces and the feel of grass underfoot. It's an antidote to the overstimulation and sedentary habits that come with excessive screen use, helping kids develop healthier bodies and minds.

## Why Outdoor Play Gifts Are Perfect for Christmas

Gifts that inspire outdoor play are more than just fun; they are an investment in your child's well-being. From classic options like jump ropes, balls, and bicycles to adventure-ready gear like kites, hiking backpacks, or even gardening kits, these gifts encourage active lifestyles and create opportunities for family bonding. Outdoor play gifts are inherently versatile, growing with your child as they explore new skills and interests.

Giving a gift that promotes outdoor play sends a powerful message: time spent in nature and away from screens is valuable. It's an invitation to prioritize connection, curiosity, and movement. Whether it's a soccer ball for friendly backyard games, a birdwatching kit for fostering wonder, or a sled for snowy adventures, these gifts create lasting memories that no digital device can replicate. This holiday season, choose gifts that open the door to exploration and joy—because the best play happens under the open sky.

# OUTDOOR PLAY GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Trampoline
- ◆ Archery
- ◆ Play equipment
- ◆ Nest swing
- ◆ Tire Swing
- ◆ Fire pit
- ◆ Tetherball
- ◆ Badminton
- ◆ Croquet
- ◆ Hula Hoop
- ◆ Jump rope
- ◆ Pogo sticks
- ◆ Mud kitchen
- ◆ Fort building
- ◆ Dirt bikes
- ◆ Scooters
- ◆ Slackline kit
- ◆ Balance beam
- ◆ Hammocks
- ◆ Portable soccer goals
- ◆ Corn hole
- ◆ Ring toss
- ◆ Volleyball net
- ◆ Binoculars
- ◆ Gardening kits
- ◆ Giant bubble kit
- ◆ Water toys/slip and slide
- ◆ Sled
- ◆ Sidewalk chalk
- ◆ Giant bubble kit
- ◆ Bird house kit
- ◆ Bikes



# THE GIFT OF FAMILY FUN & ATTACHMENT



Whether your child knows it or not, spending time with you is one of their greatest desires. It's not about being spoiled—it's a crucial part of their emotional and social development. When you give them your undivided attention, you're helping them form healthy attachments within the family, which are essential for building trust, security, and self-worth. These strong family bonds will also help them navigate relationships as they grow older. Simple activities like playing board games, reading books, or even playing hide-and-seek create lasting connections that help your child feel valued and loved.

Outdoor play offers even more developmental benefits, meeting key needs for attachment, movement, touch, and connection to nature. Spending time outside—whether it's a walk, bike ride, or playing a game of catch—helps regulate the body's stress responses, boosts creativity, and fosters problem-solving skills. Nature has a calming and rejuvenating effect, which no screen or gadget can replicate. It's not just about physical exercise; it's about nourishing your child's mind, body, and spirit.

Because family outdoor activities are so beneficial, it's important to prioritize them, even in our busy lives. Think about how you can integrate more outdoor time into your routine—whether it's a camping trip, a bike ride, or even an impromptu game of soccer in the backyard. Gifts that encourage outdoor play, like camping gear, a new bike, or sports equipment, are great for this purpose. Even something as simple as a football or basketball can create spontaneous opportunities for connection, turning small moments into active family time.

By making time for these family activities, you're not only promoting physical health and emotional well-being but also creating memories and strengthening your bond with your child. Whether planned or spontaneous, time spent together outdoors fosters connection, builds confidence, and helps your child grow into a well-rounded, resilient individual.

# THE GIFT OF FAMILY FUN & ATTACHMENT GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Camping equipment
- ◆ Local sightseeing
- ◆ Play equipment for the backyard
- ◆ Disk or saucer tree swing
- ◆ Day trips
- ◆ Weekend trips
- ◆ Boating
- ◆ Rafting
- ◆ Bikes and gear
- ◆ Tickets to outdoor play or concert
- ◆ Flashlights
- ◆ Headlamps
- ◆ Reflective vest
- ◆ Backyard fire pit
- ◆ Sailing trip
- ◆ Treetops courses
- ◆ Zipline
- ◆ Scuba diving, Snorkeling
- ◆ Tickets to sporting events
- ◆ Skiing (snow or water)
- ◆ Wave runners, Snowmobile
- ◆ Sledding/Tubing
- ◆ Local Zoo/Science
- ◆ Art Museum Season Pass
- ◆ Escape Room

# THE GIFTS OF ACTS OF SERVICE



This is not what you may think. I know that doing family service projects together is wonderful for families. The experience is rich, and we need to do more of it. The service I am suggesting here is the gift of you doing something for your child. It involves sacrifice on your end.

Our children need to learn what sacrifice feels like from both ends: the giving and the receiving. They also need to learn what empathy is. In these days of peer cruelty, weak moral reasoning, and narcissism, our children's character is being eroded. Children who have grown up exercising their empathy muscle tend to have warmer relationships with their parents and can manage their emotions better, which leads to overall life success. However, they must first learn what empathy is through your example.

It is very hard for children to learn how to serve if it is not modeled for them. Any mom who has ever had someone make a meal for her understands the value and sacrifice of that gift. She is motivated to return the gift to another family in need because she understands and has felt the benefit herself. Our children will learn how to give sacrificially and be empathetic when it is modeled for them.

For this category, think of things that will show your child you love him, acts of service that will show you pay attention to his world and care about it. This gift generally works well for all children, but it works very well for older kids and teens when they are mature enough and can understand the value of the sacrifice.

The benefits of this gift will last a lifetime. Your act of service will be remembered for longer than that new video game or smartphone. When you deposit these acts of kindness into your child's life, they will grow up with the ability to imagine themselves doing the same thing. You are depositing value into your child's identity bank to be accessed down the road when they will need it most.



# ACTS OF SERVICE GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Paint/decorate your child's room.
- ◆ Make a tradition to make your child's favorite meal or dessert a certain day every month.
- ◆ Offer to play his favorite board game when he is feeling down or is upset.
- ◆ Spend time with his sport/hobby even when you are busy.
- ◆ Help your teen fix or wash his car.
- ◆ Fix a bike.
- ◆ Build a pitching mound or golf hole in the backyard.
- ◆ Do one of your child's chores when he is overwhelmed with schoolwork.
- ◆ Write your child a Christmas letter or a note of encouragement on tough days to lift their spirits and create lasting memories.

# THE GIFT OF YOUR TIME



The most valuable gift you can give your child is the gift of your uninterrupted, non-tech time. We spend our money and our time on the things we love, and our children know this. Think in terms of talking, building your relationship, relaxing, or playing with your child one-on-one. Sometimes, it may just be reading a book side by side in silence.

**Whatever you are doing, there are only two rules:**

1. You are physically present with your child.
2. You are not connected to your technology (TV, laptop, phone).

It doesn't matter what you are doing, but rather that it sets the stage for you to bond with your child. The purpose of this gift is also to get to know your child better (making him feel loved) and expose your child to your values and beliefs. Sometimes, just grabbing an unexpected fifteen minutes with your child will be easy, but most of the time, it needs to be scheduled to make it happen.

Schedule an hour on the weekend when they know they will have time alone with you to talk about whatever is on their mind. Sometimes, children are most receptive when they are winding down at night, and long conversations at bedtime can be heartwarming and rewarding. Rubbing your child's back often dismantles their typical defenses and inspires them to share their troubles when they wouldn't normally do so.

The gift of your time will make even your older kids feel loved and special more than any other gift you can wrap up or plugin. Trust me on this one!

# YOUR TIME GIFT IDEAS

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- ◆ Coupon book for special outings (get ice cream, movie ticket, neighborhood pool)
- ◆ Regular monthly one-on-one dinner out
- ◆ A trip to the bookstore to browse
- ◆ Reading a book together at a scheduled time
- ◆ Cooking something together
- ◆ Taking the dog for a walk with just one child
- ◆ Fishing together
- ◆ Camping or going to the park
- ◆ Planting a garden together
- ◆ Building an indoor fort on a rainy/snowy day
- ◆ A trip to a local antique store
- ◆ Go on a hike together
- ◆ Build a tree fort with your child
- ◆ Build a go-cart together
- ◆ Design an obstacle course or treasure hunt
- ◆ Working on a project together, like building model airplanes, or sharing hobbies like modeling trains, etc.



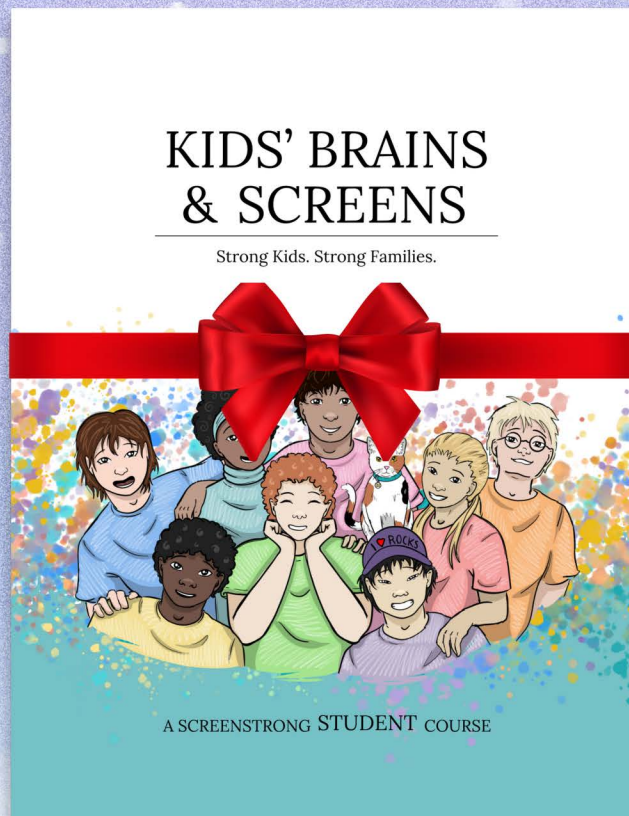
# THE BEST GIFT OF ALL

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## THE GIFT OF A SCREENSTRONG CHILDHOOD

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