

I'm bored, 30 Ways to Keep Kids Entertained When the Power Goes Out

By Daisy Luther

Let the wind blow, let the snow fall, let the power go out. You've got it under control. You have your water, your off-grid heating method and enough fuel to see you through until spring, your food that can easily be prepared without electricity, your candles and fully charged solar lanterns. You are set to weather this storm for however long it wants to assault your area.

Except.

The kids.

They are... DRIVING. YOU. INSANE.

In all of your preps, if it didn't occur to you to put aside some activities that don't require power or a lot of light, you may be in for a bumpy ride in the event of a power failure. Your children, since they are warm and fed, don't understand (or care) that you had to prepare in advance to keep them warm and fed. All they care about is...

"I'm boooooooooooooooorrrrrrrreeeeeeedddddddd."

As a mom, I feel your pain, I really do. "I'm bored" is like fingernails running down a chalkboard to me. I like to respond, "Only boring people get bored. Interesting people find something to do." And yes, my children repeat it along with me mockingly.

Last year, my youngest daughter and I spent a winter in a cabin that lost power every time the wind blew too hard. We learned a lot about taking power outages in stride. If a winter storm is on route, there are a lot of things you can do to be ready for it. Here are just a few quick and easy things that have nothing to do with entertainment and everything to do with general comfort.

Fill the bathtub

If a storm threatens to take out the power, immediately fill the bathtubs. This water can be used for cleaning, for flushing if you are on a septic system, and for water for the pets.

Keep symbiotic items together

Store matches and lighters with candles. Store batteries with flashlights. We had off-grid lighting with matches in every single room of our house so that we could easily acquire light. Nothing is more than searching around in the dark for matches to light the candle that you need to be able to see to find the matches.

Have food set aside that requires no cooking

If you have no power, some of your normal cooking methods may not be feasible. .

Use paper plates

This is a great time to use up all of those old leftover birthday party paper plates and napkins. (My kids always found it fun to remember the party associated with the clown plate and the My Little Pony plates – also, competition was often fierce for who got what plate.) Particularly if your water supply is affected, you don't want to have to wash tons of dishes in the bathtub water.

Keep boredom at bay

Keep a box of off-grid entertainment supplies in an easy-to-access place

Make one up for the different members of the family and make these items things that the kids are not allowed to play with at any other time so that they are novel and interesting when the time comes to use them. Include things like stationary supplies, notebooks, pens and pencils, sharpeners, colors or coloring pencils, markers, glue sticks, glitter, puzzles, activity books, games, stickers...make it a treasure trove! Be sure you include all of the supplies needed for each activity because it's hard to find things when your home is only lit by candlelight.

I asked our community on Facebook for their best ideas to keep the kiddos entertained and not “bored” when the lights are low and the power is out. (Thank you to Andrea for the great article idea!) This is a round-up of the creative ideas! Stock up on what you need for these fun activities before the next grid-down scenario!

- Shadow puppets
- Books
- Hide and Seek Telling stories – kids are especially engaged with chain stories
- Reading aloud
- Card games
- Battleship
- Board games
- Flashlight hide and seek
- Flashlight tag
- Guess the shadow
- We play ” how many pulls till the generator starts”
- Toys that do not need batteries, like dollhouses and kitchens, dinky cars, and floor
- Make your house an obstacle course. A way to run around, roll over beds, etc to get some energy out.
- Card games
- Coloring
- Arts and crafts
- Send them outside, weather permitting
- Imagination games like playing house, cops and robbers, don’t step in the lava, camping in the wilderness
- Put on a play
- Play dress-up
- Collect song books and have a sing-along in front of the fire
- Play music together (piano, makeshift drums, harmonica, spoons, castanets, etc.)
- Make puppets and put on a puppet show
- Make “campfire food” in the fireplace – for example, roast marshmallows and make smores
- Get out those old photos and finally assemble them in scrapbooks
- Play word games like Hangman
- Playing old games like jacks, pick-up sticks, and tumbling towers

- Play with building toys like blocks, Lincoln Logs, or Lego

Believe it or not, my daughter actually got to the point where she was happy when the power went out because the games and activities were a welcome break from the overstimulated everyday world of school, work, and media. These days, we are pretty unfazed by grid down situations – they're like a little vacation.

Spend your next power outage making great memories with your kids. You may discover that you actually prefer life without all of the bells and whistles.

How do you keep the kids entertained when the power goes out? Is it radically different from their everyday activities?

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