



# Parenting for Creativity:

Simple and engaging activities to enhance your child's creative thinking at home, on the go, or in the great outdoors.

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Designed for children, grades K-6

# Letter from the Creator

Hey, parents and guardians!

My name is Carrie Baker and I hope that you enjoy this resource we've put together. If there is one thing that is crucial to enriching our youth, it is enhancing their creativity. We've put together this guide of simple and fun activities for you to do with your child just about anytime, anywhere. Most of these activities require little to no resources, which means that you can help them become better creative thinkers on a budget. Helping your child won't require that you invest hundreds or even thousands of dollars in training or education. To help them be successful and develop their creativity, you just need to spend time with them, be intentional with the way you interact and respond to them and model creativity yourself.

The step-by-step instructions in each activity will help you do just that! Remember, your child will thrive when they feel encouraged and supported to be creative. We hope these activities will inspire your family to make creative thinking part of your daily routine in small, but intentional ways!

I can't wait for you to get started!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carrie Baker', with a stylized, flowing script.

Carrie Baker

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# Tips for Creative Thinking

In each of these activities, we provide you with ways to help your child become a more creative thinker. But part of that is not just doing the activity, but doing the activity in a way that fosters creativity. This means that how you prompt them, how you respond, and the way in which you ask them to complete the activity, matters. Below are some guidelines to help you think about how to foster an environment that encourages creative thinking.

## Guidelines for Idea Generation

As your child starts coming up with ideas, the goal is to get them to:

**Produce many ideas** (shoot for quantity and don't worry about quality at first)

**Produce unusual ideas** (shoot for ideas that are unique and different)

**Combine ideas** (build off of previous ideas to form new ones)

**Defer judgment** (don't filter your ideas - no idea is off limits)

## Elements of Creative Thinking

Creative thinking requires:

**Fluency** (Think of as many ideas as possible)

**Flexibility** (Ideas should fit into different categories. Diversity is key.)

**Originality** (Ideas are unusual, different, unconventional)

**Elaboration** (Ideas should be detailed to add clarity and specificity)



# Home Activities



# The Cardboard Box Challenge

Great for all, but more appropriate for Grades K-1

## Purpose & Description

This is probably one of the most popular with the kiddos! The Cardboard Box Challenge is intended to spark your child's creativity and enable them to use their imagination and role play. Tell them that they can be anyone they want for the day and their cardboard box can be made into anything. Let them come up with an idea and then help them shape and decorate their box to match the object they choose. Make sure to help with the cutting! Then, help them find a costume or outfit to match their role and let them play!

## Creativity Check

Showing your child a cardboard box and asking them to make it into something completely different, encourages them to think creatively to find a solution with limited resources. It also allows them to go through the process of idea generation, which helps them think through all possible options for their cardboard box. They'll then use reasoning to ultimately choose what their box will become! By allowing them space to think independently and use divergent thinking, you will help your child develop creatively! By fostering this sort of role play in your home, it also shows them that creativity is encouraged and welcomed. If you jump in on the fun, you'll also set the example that creativity is important and part of the everyday life of your family. Just make sure not to direct their thinking or hamper any ideas they might have. Remember, no idea is too wild or crazy!

### What you'll need:

A large cardboard box

Materials to decorate with (paint, glue, crayons, markers, pipe cleaners, scissors, etc.)

Don't have a big box lying around?

Many stores (Shipping and moving facilities, grocery stores, chain retail stores, restaurants or fast food chains, etc.) will give you one for free if you call.



# Walk the Catwalk

Great for all grades, K-6

## Purpose & Description

You can go about this activity a few different ways. Either you can set it up as a “fashion show” with you or others in your family, or you can use it as a way to allow your child to pick out their wardrobe for a weekend (or more). For the activity, you’ll go into their closet and select various items of clothing (tops, bottoms, jackets, shoes and accessories). Depending on how long you plan to do this activity, the number of items will change. But, you always want to give them less items than outfits you’re asking them to make (i.e. if you want them to make 10 outfits, provide them with 5 tops, 5 bottoms, 5 shoes, 5 accessories). Then, you’ll lay them all out and ask them to create outfits. After they create the outfit, ask them to tell you where and when they would wear this outfit and why they chose it. If you choose the fashion show route, you can use their conversation to write up a small narrative for the emcee of the fashion show to read when they walk out in their outfit. If you’re using this to help them pick out their wardrobe, you can use their conversations to create a schedule that they can hang in their room to help them get dressed in the mornings!

## What you’ll need:

Items of clothing

Paper and Pencil

A “microphone” for the emcee (if you do the fashion show) Be creative!

A “catwalk” (towels, sheets, rugs, or build it)

## Creativity Check



This activity is great for children because it allows them to use their creative thinking and logical reasoning skills. It also helps them practice seeking combinations, which is one of the guidelines of divergent thinking. In addition to challenging their creative thinking, by allowing them to have independence in choosing their outfits, it shows them that trust them and encourage their creativity.

# Cooking Show

This may be more appropriate for older children, grades 2 and above

## Purpose & Description

This activity is a robust one! In this activity, you'll let your child pick out their favorite meal and make it (this may be a great way to get them to help make dinner). Again, don't hamper their creativity. After you get out the necessary ingredients, ask them to go to the refrigerator and pick three other surprise "mystery" ingredients that don't normally go in the meal. (You can give them free reign, set aside a few and ask them to pick from those, or have them reach in to a set of pre-selected ingredients blindfolded). After they have all the ingredients, including the surprise ingredients, have them talk through what they might and what ways they might be able to incorporate the surprise ingredients. But, before you start cooking, help them set up their "set." Allow them to choose a name and a slogan for the show. Then help them set up the "media." This can be something as simple as starting the recording on your phone, setting up a camera, or even just setting up something and telling them that is their "camera."

As you get started helping them follow the instructions on the recipe, allow them to narrate as if they were on a cooking show! As you cook, ask them questions as if you are a "guest star." Here are some great questions to ask:

*Why did you choose this meal?*

*If you were to cook this meal for a special occasion, what would it be and why?*

*If I didn't have (ingredient) what else could I make or what could I use instead?*

## Creativity Check

Asking them to also play a star on a cooking show lets them role play and use their imagination, but also challenges them to verbalize the steps that they are taking as they cook. This takes quite a bit of concentration, but also helps them see that there are no bounds on creativity. Try not to hamper their creativity worrying about the mess or making mistakes (with measurements, etc.) While we don't want to waste, we want them to know that it's okay to make mistakes. Find ways to show them how to adapt their recipe to what resources you have. Also, make sure to defer judgment if your child asks to make a meal you feel doesn't "fit." Who knows, you may really like spaghetti a la corn!

# Sponge Painting

Great for all, but might be more exciting for younger age groups

## Purpose & Description

This is a great way to let your child lean into their artistic side. Get a variety of sponges and cut them into various shapes and sizes. Take paint and place it on a paper plate.

Get out sheets of paper and let your child dip their sponges into the paint(s) and create four marks on the paper. After their done, let them dry. Once their dry, take the pieces of paper and talk with your child about what they see? Ask them questions like,

*What animals do you see in this painting?*

*What objects around the house do you see in this painting?*

*What objects at school do you see in this painting?*

*How does this painting make you feel and why?*

## Creativity Check

This activity not only lets children generate ideas, but it also allows them to make connections with what they visualize in the art they've created to objects that they see on a daily basis. This will stretch their creative thinking. As they describe to you what they see, make sure to defer judgment and encourage "wild and crazy" ideas.

In a way, this is like solving a problem or completing a puzzle. Make sure to encourage that they manipulate the art they see (turning the paper, folding, etc.). This will challenge their perspective and try to get them to see the painting from different viewpoints. Also, prompt them to continue providing ideas. Rather than letting them stop at one or two visuals, try to get them to keep describing what they see. See if you can get them to describe at least five different objects for each.

## What you'll need:

Paint (Acrylic or craft paint works best—especially if it's washable)

Paper (Pinter paper, construction paper, or butcher paper works great! Any size will do, but the bigger the better)

Sponges

Scissors



# Indoor Scavenger Hunt

Great for all grades, K-6

## Purpose & Description

This is a wonderful, simple (and no cost) rainy day activity! Sit down and cut out slips of paper (as many as you want/need). Then come up with a list of “Find \_\_\_\_ things that...” Then, have your child go throughout the house to find things that qualify! When they get back, ask them to explain what they found to you and why they chose them!

## Creativity Check

This activity challenges your child to think outside the box. Depending on what you have in your home, this may be harder than you think. When making your list, think about clues or prompts that will require your child to use divergent thinking. We want to challenge them to find more than one object for each prompt, because this will challenge them to look around at their surroundings and locate objects that they might not normally use to accomplish those tasks. This also helps promote flexibility in their thoughts, which is one of the key elements of creative thinking. Additionally, by asking them to describe their objects and explain their rationale, it also challenges their logic and reasoning skills in a creative way!

### Possible Hunt Items:

Seven things that roll

Two things that you would need if you were a pioneer in the past

Four things that make noise

Two things that you could use to make a rocket ship

Three things that you could use to scratch your back with

Five things (other than a phone) you can use to talk to someone with

Four things you would need if you were a mailman

Five things that you would take on a safari

Four things that you use every day

Six things that we hardly ever use





# On-the-Go Activities



# Grocery Store Alphabet

Great for all grades, K-6

## Purpose & Description

This is perfect for while you're in the grocery store, trying to keep your kiddo entertained, but it also works just about anytime, anywhere. We used to play this game growing up and it really challenged us to think outside of the box.

*There's a couple ways you can play it.*

**If you're in the grocery store:** As you're walking through the store, have your child identify items that start with each letter of the alphabet. They have to start with "A" and once they've spotted and pointed out the object, they can move to the next letter. You can allow them to name the object itself or the brand, if you choose. For example (they could use Macaroni and Cheese for M, or if they chose Kraft Macaroni and Cheese, that could count for K). The only rules are that they can't use the same object (or brand) twice.

**If you're not in a grocery store:** You can just play it as a naming game. Start out, "My (mother, father, sister, brother, friend, grandma, grandpa, aunt, uncle, etc.) owns a grocery store and in it they sell something that begins with the letter \_\_\_\_\_. The person who starts the game chooses the letter, then everyone playing takes a turn coming up with an item that could be found in a grocery store that starts with that letter. Again, no repeats!

## Creativity Check



This activity not only is a great way to keep your child busy and pass the time, but it challenges their divergent thinking. Because there are no repeat answers, they have to dig deep and think of grocery items that begin with each letter. It also helps them practice their alphabet, which is great developmentally for this age group! When playing the game in the "If you're not in a grocery store" version, it also helps children to think in quantity. The name of the game is to come up with as many grocery store items that start with a certain letter. By not limiting them, it challenges them to produce many ideas and produce unique ideas, which are both part of the creative idea generation process.

# Home Improvement

Great for all grades, K-6

## Purpose & Description

This might be one of my favorites. This exercise, which we've called Home Improvement lets your child design their own home. Whether you're riding in a car or taking a walk, this activity can be implemented just about anywhere with absolutely no resources.

For this activity, you simply ask your child, If you could design and build a brand new house, what would it look like?

### Ask Questions Like:

What will it be made out of?

How big will it be?

What colors will you make it?

Where will you build it?

How many rooms will it have?

What will the outside look like?

## Creativity Check



This activity is a great open-ended game for your child to practice their creative thinking. By asking them questions until they have fully described their entire house and anything it might be equipped with, it challenges their idea generation. Again, the key is to get them to come up with as many original ideas as possible for their new house and to elaborate as much as possible—both are key elements of creative thinking.

# Build a Superhero

Great for all, but might be more intriguing for younger age groups

## Purpose & Description

Description: This game is similar to the last in that it utilizes open-ended questioning to get your child thinking and exercising their creativity. To start off the activity, you ask them:

*What are some superpowers that would be cool to have if you were a superhero?*

Have them think of as many superpowers as possible, asking them follow up questions about what that superpower was, how it worked, what they would be able to do with it, etc. Then, after they've exhausted their options, ask them if they were to combine some of their favorites to "build a superhero" with multiple powers. Ask follow up questions like...

If you were a superhero....

Why would you want those superpowers?

What would you be able to do?

What would your name be?

What would your Super Suit look like?

Where would you live?

## Creativity Check



This activity is similar to the Home Improvement exercise. The open-ended questions really allow for you to avoid guiding or limiting questions, which strengthens the originality of thought. By challenging your child to think of as many superpowers as possible at the beginning, it helps them with fluency and flexibility—which means that they come up with as many different ideas as possible. This step is meant to help them get out all of their potential ideas. The next step is intended to help your child combine some of those ideas to "create" their ideal superhero. Seeking combinations is one of the guidelines for idea generation.



# Happily Ever After

Great for all grades, K-6

## Purpose & Description

This is a great game to play while you're driving. This game allows you and your child to "write" a story together. It can be played with as many people as you want. Each player takes turns contributing to the story. Again, this can be played a few ways.

1) Before you start, you can write down "things" on pieces of paper (these can be people, places, objects, verbs, etc.) Then, whenever it is someone's turn, they draw out a piece of paper and have to incorporate it into the story. Whoever draws the last slip of paper has to end the story.

2) If you're traveling, you can go back and forth and you have to contribute to the story based upon what you see (if you pass by a blue car, you say something about a blue car in the story).

3) You can "free wheel" the story - meaning that there are no prompts or guides. One of you simply starts off and you work your way through the story until you decide to stop. The last person will wrap things up and contribute to the ending! In this version, the wilder the story, the better!

## Creativity Check



This activity really gives your child the freedom to think creatively. Formatting it in the form of a story challenges their problem-solving skills, as their contributions to the story have to follow a pattern of some sort, or "fit" within the rest of the story. This also helps them to build and expand off of previous ideas, which is another element of creative thinking and idea generation. If you, or others around, play along, it again shows that creative thinking is welcomed and encouraged. The more creative ideas you contribute, the better the model they have for what kinds of ideas are acceptable.

# This or That, or This or That

Great for all grades, K-6

## Purpose & Description

This game is modeled after J.P. Guilford's Alternative Uses Test for creative thinking. The name of the game is simple. You look around your house to find 5-10 simple objects (paperclip, spoon, straw, cup etc.). Then, you set up each object one by one and have your child take it and either act out, draw, or make a list of all the alternative uses for that item.

A good way to prompt them is by asking, "If you didn't use this for drinking, what else could it be used for?"

Once they've exhausted their ideas, have them talk through each one of them with you before moving onto the next item.

## Creativity Check



This activity tests all the elements of creativity and helps children generate creative ideas. It also helps them to shift their perspective and think about their surroundings and the things they use every day differently. It is games like this that create future inventors and innovators!

## !! Remember !!

With we're looking for...

- 1) Originality—how unique are their responses
- 2) Fluency—How many ideas did they come up with?.
- 3) Flexibility—do they fit into different categories.
- 4) elaboration—how much detail did they provide.



A photograph of a young child and an adult walking on a large, horizontal log in a forest. The child, on the left, is wearing a bright yellow hooded sweatshirt, dark blue pants, and blue and red rubber boots. They are holding the hand of the adult, who is on the right. The adult is wearing a grey sweater, blue jeans, and bright blue rubber boots. The background shows blurred tree trunks and a forest floor. A white rectangular box with orange text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Outdoor Activities



# The Name Game

Great for all grades, K-6

## Purpose & Description

This activity is a great one to complete while you're on a walk or sitting outside. It's also really simple. If you're doing this with a younger child, like K-1, you might want to just use this as a back and forth discussion time. But if you're working with older children in this category, or those that can already write, make sure to have a notepad and a pen or pencil on hand for each of you!

While your outside, pick out things that you see one-by-one (grass, flowers, swing sets, sand box, clouds, etc.). After you choose an item, both of you write down as many "alternate names" for the item as you can. i.e. "If a sandbox wasn't called a sandbox, what would it be called?"

If you're just discussing your ideas, let your child get as many ideas out on the table as they can think of and then you contribute your ideas and discuss them before moving on to the next item. If you're playing with an older or more advanced child, after writing for about five minutes, bring your ideas back to the table. Again, have your child share their ideas (but remember, defer judgment) and then you share yours. Discuss your ideas and compare them.

### What you'll need:

If playing with older children:

Pencil/Pen

Pad or piece of paper

## Creativity Check



This exercise also helps your child flex all of their creativity muscles, similar to the alternative uses test, it inspires your child develop many original ideas and shift their perspective. For the older children, by encouraging them to work independently and come up with ideas on their own first, it helps them to feel as if they can write down all of their potential answers without stifling their creativity. This way they aren't led or guided by any of your answers.

# Musical Nature Walk

Great for all, but best for grades 1-5

## Purpose & Description

This activity is one of my favorites for a few reasons. First, because you get to spend some time getting some fresh air—which is always good for your physical and mental health, but second, because it is such a great creativity booster! The name of this game is to take a walk outside, with one stipulation—while you’re walking, give your child the task of finding objects that they can collect to make some sort of musical instrument!

The sky is the limit with this one! Just make sure that you take some sort of a bag or wagon along with you to haul their load!

After your child is satisfied, take them back home and help them talk through how they want to construct their masterpiece. Let them throw out all of their ideas! No idea is too crazy. If it makes noise, it’s an instrument!

Remember, your job is just to help with construction if they need it. Feel free to improvise if you need certain items to “complete” their instrument. Once your done, start a band, sing a song, play a tune and you’re all set!

## Creativity Check



This exercise isn’t just creative because it involves music. Rather, it’s about the process that it takes to conceptualize the instrument and envision objects they find in nature as being the pieces to their puzzle. This activity challenges their problem-solving skills and also encourages creative idea generation. It helps work their motor skills as well, and gets them out in nature, which has been proven to boost creativity. Your child will draw inspiration from the world around them to ultimately make something out of “nothing.”



# Up in the Clouds

Great for all, but best for grades K-4

## Purpose & Description

This is another fantastic (and free) activity to help your child think creatively. This is a game we always used to play as kids, but never one I thought about from an academic or constructive standpoint until I started researching creativity. For this exercise, all you need is a nice day with visible clouds in the sky!

All you need to do is head outside and look up. You may want to take a chair, or (my personal favorite) a blanket to lay down on the ground for cloud watching. Look up at the sky with your child and ask them what they see in the clouds. Have them point out different ones and describe to you what they see and how many different “things” they can make out of each cloud. After they’ve listed all of theirs, it’s your turn to model creativity. Throw out as many ideas as you can think of. Once you’re both satisfied, start in on another cloud and repeat!

## Creativity Check



This game challenges your child’s creative thinking because truly, the sky’s the limit. The success and effectiveness of this exercise truly depends on how you react and respond to your child’s answers. By continually prompting them to elaborate on their ideas, you can help become a more creative thinker. How you model creativity and what answers you provide will also set the bar for what kinds of answers you expect. Challenging yourself challenges them!

# Extreme Obstacle Course

Great for all grades, K-6

## Purpose & Description

Another personal favorite—Let's just be honest, they're ALL our favorites! This activity also gets your child outside and moving. It's a great way for them to get their creative thinking flowing and burn off some energy.

The name of this game is to have your child help you plan out an obstacle course, using only things they can find in the house or outside in the yard. While you could just plan an obstacle course for them, this activity helps them think through problem-solving and also shifts their perspective to help them use everyday objects in a new way.

Make sure to prompt them to get more creative answers—AKA don't let them just throw out one idea per item. Have them tell you all possible ideas they might have to incorporate that object into the course. If they only tell you one way, ask them "what other ways could you use this item?" Once you have the course all mapped out, place the objects around the yard and let them go! You can make it a timed event, a race, or have them try crazy things while they complete it.

## Creativity Check



This game gets your child moving and also challenges them to think creatively and solve problems with limited resources. This activity gives them the independence and autonomy to be truly creative, without fear of mistakes, mess-ups, or judgment. There truly is no wrong answer or approach. It gives them full utility to think creatively and expand their mind to create something similar to a life-size puzzle.

# Float the Boat

Best for Grades 3-6

## Purpose & Description

This activity is similar to the musical instrument activity. For this exercise, you are to challenge your child to go throughout your home and the great outdoors to find items that could be used to build a boat. After you've gathered all potential items, take them back inside to construct your ship! While you're building, talk with your child about why they chose the materials that they chose and why they think they'll help the boat float.

After each rendition of their boat, take them outside and test out their boat in a tub or bucket of water. If it floats for at five seconds, count it as a win! If it sinks, go back to the drawing board and have your child revamp their boat, using other designs or materials they think will work better.

## Creativity Check



Of all the activities, this is probably the most complex in this guide. This activity is best for older children because it gives them the opportunity to think creatively to solve a pretty difficult problem. They not only have to manipulate their environment to create something out of unconventional products and that new “innovation” has to work!



