

2 Quick (and Cheap) Projects to Encourage Play

Written by Fancy Builder
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While (of course) we think every kid should have one of our [playhouses](#) in the backyard, we understand that's not realistic. But it's still important to find ways to play.

We already wrote about the great book [The Power of Play: How Spontaneous, Imaginative, Activities Lead to Healthier, Happier Children](#) [here](#) , but here's a quote that really sums it up:

"Over the past two decades, children have lost 12 hours of free time a week, including 8 hours of unstructured play and outdoor activities. In contrast, the amount of time spent in organized sports has doubled, and the number of minutes children devote to passive spectator leisure, not counting TV but including sports viewing, has increased fivefold from 30 minutes to over 3 hours. The health consequences for children resulting from the disappearance of play (obesity, attention deficit disorder) are already apparent."

So what are some things you can do to encourage important, imaginative play? There are lots of ways using things you already have around the house or simple inexpensive materials. Some are even things we do in our playhouses. Here's our two simple ideas you could do today.

[Chalkboard paint](#) . It's not quite as functional as a "real" chalkboard, but chalkboard paint is an inexpensive and easy way to add playful elements to your house. Our current favorite way to incorporate it is to give each child a place to write themselves reminders or draw pictures. This can be in their rooms, lined up in a mud room, or anywhere you have the space. Here's some easy instructions:



Ung Drill from Ikea

-Grab a cute frame (we found this Ung Drill frame at [Ikea](#) for \$24.99) -Roll painter's tape into rolls and put on the back of the picture template from the frame. Position the frame where you

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want it to be. (Alternatively, you can use the template to cut a piece of MDF or plywood to avoid painting your wall.) -T

ape off the area around the template. Paint inside the template. Let it dry and apply another coat. Repeat once more for a total of three coats.

-Allow to cure for 24 hours. Frame.

-It's handy to add a small molding ledge or a nail to hang a cute bag off of to hold chalk and an eraser.

-Watch your kids' artistic sides shine!

A quick and easy play area

[Create a mini-retreat](#) . You don't have to have a giant area or a specialized structure to give your children a place to let their imaginations run wild. Something as simple as hanging a canopy in a corner of a bedroom can create opportunities for adventure and make-believe.

So go play! It's good for you.