

Family Connection Challenge

We have always been big on down time. We carefully selected outings and enrichment activities so that the bulk of our time was spent at home... together. It was wonderful and because of it connecting as a family was just something that happened naturally.

Everything is changing though. With growing careers, hubby and I are finding ourselves working more. The kids are also getting older. They want to play sports and join plays and play with neighborhood friends. All of these things seem like the natural next step, but it leaves us rushing around.

It suddenly became clear that we were in very serious need of a family connection boot camp. Hubby and I need to be intentional about spending quality time as a family or it just flat out isn't going to happen.

I created this Family Connection Challenge for our family. My sister and I (she's in a similar busy place) brainstormed 30 activities to do as a family. Some of them are easy and only take a few minutes. Others take a bit of planning or prep.

Once the ball was rolling we realized just how much we had missed the connection that used to come so easily. The Family Connection Challenge made a big difference for us... and I hope it will do the same for you.

How to Use the Family Connection Challenge

I really want this to work for your family, just like it's worked for ours. I've put this challenge together in a way that is flexible and easy to use. The reason I chose 30 activities is that after a month you'll probably be in the habit of thinking about connecting as a family. Once it's a habit, connecting will be easy.

Pick whichever idea below works best for you, combine them to find a solution that fits perfect for your family or find a totally different way to use the Family Connection Challenges idea. (Then email me at amomwithalessonplan@gmail.com so that I can share your great idea with other families!)

- **Set the schedule ahead of time.** Use the blank grid as a calendar. Cut out the Family Connection Idea squares and glue them onto the calendar. If you do this, make sure to compare it to your already packed schedule. Which activities will fit best on super busy days? Will there be days that you need to skip? Plan around that day. Which days will be good for bigger projects?
- **Make it a game.** Cut out all of the Family Connection Idea squares. Place them in a bowl or cup. At dinner (or another time when everyone is together) pull out a square. Put that as your plan for the next day. You can even use the blank grid to



glue on activities you've done. What a fun way to see how the challenge is going!

- **Make it work for you.** If there are challenge ideas that don't work for your family. Don't use them. Replace them with an idea that you already know your family loves. You can use some ideas more than once. We play a lot of games. So that easily popped up over and over. Which simple activity would that be for you?

You CAN connect with your family... even with a busy schedule.



Family Screen Time	Play a Game	Read Together	Bake Cookies	Just Play	Enjoy Music Together
Clean	Run Errands	Set up a Note Station	Have a Picnic Meal	Puzzle Time	Visit a Museum
Blow Bubbles	Play the Line Game	Take a Drive	Look at Baby Books	Family Art Project	Teach a Skill
Take a Bike Ride	Play Catch	Watch Home Movies	Camp at Home	Family Science Project	Take an Evening Walk
Play Mad Libs	Plant Something	Snuggle and Share Memories	Nature Scavenger Hunt	Prepare Conversation Starters	Make a Family Scrapbook





Family Connection Activity Tips and Ideas

Some of the family connection activities are obvious. You will immediately have ideas that will make those activities work for your family. Other activities might take you a bit out of your comfort zone or be new ideas completely. I've listed a description for each activity and given tips for how to get the most family connection possible out of each one. Enjoy!

- **Family Screen Time.** At our house screen time equals work time for me. For this challenge I took the opportunity to snuggle up for a few kid shows. I forgot how nice it is to just be quietly snuggled together. *Connecting tip:* Find shows that you like to watch as a family and make it something to look forward to each week when a new episode airs. We like food shows, design shows and science shows.
- **Play a Game.** We love games. It's one of our go-to ways to connect as a family. Pick an old favorite or learn a new one. *Connecting tip:* Some games only require a few minutes. Here is a list of [games divided by the amount of time you have to play](#). Find a few that you like, that are short, and you always have an easy way to connect, even with only a few minutes.
- **Read Together.** Pick a book that even your newest reader can read. Take turns reading. As the kid's reading level increases so can the length and difficulty of the book. (I have a confession. I dream of reading lengthy chapter books with my kids as teenagers. I know it's possible because some of you have told me it happens at your house!)
- **Bake Cookies.** How much time do you have? You can bake from scratch, buy premade dough or decorate already made cookies. Just make it special by doing it together as a family.
- **Just Play.** Sometimes the easiest thing to do is sit down when the kids are already engaged. Find out what they are up to and join in.
- **Enjoy Music Together.** The other day I turned on some music. I did it because I wanted to hear music, but suddenly we were all engaged and singing together. Even though we were in the middle of different activities we were connecting. *Connecting tip:* If you try it once and it doesn't have this affect, try again another day.
- **Clean.** Clean? That's no fun! Well that is just not true. Cleaning is way more fun when you do it as a team. We love to focus on one room and race each other with our "spaces". *Connecting tip:* Make it more about connecting than a perfect clean. You can make the floors sparkle next time.
- **Run Errands.** Errands are the perfect time to be together. Go out all together or make it a "date" and just take one kid. *Connecting tip:* Talk, be silly and spend a little more time than you need on each errand. It's more fun that way.
- **Set up a Note Station.** Find a spot in the house to set up a note station. Include sticky notes, pens, markers and stickers. Encourage everyone to write quick notes (or draw pictures) and leave them for other family members to find.



- **Have a Picnic Meal.** Plan a picnic or just decide to do one last minute. Any meal will work. Have breakfast on the living room floor, have dinner at the park or take lunch out back.
- **Puzzle Time.** Find a puzzle that everyone (even the youngest) can help with. Set it out in a place that everyone gathers. When there are few minutes of downtime sit and work on it. It will quickly become a family project.
- **Visit a Museum.** Find one close to home or drive a bit for one with great reviews.
- **Blow Bubbles.**
- **Play the Line Game.** The line game is one of our favorite creative ways to play when we're waiting for something or just have a few minutes to kill. You need a piece of paper and a pencil. One person draws a line. The other person turns that line into a drawing. Then starts a new picture by making a line.
- **Take a Drive...** with no destination in mind. Take turns picking which way you'll turn. Talk about the things you pass. Maybe even make a surprise stop for a treat.
- **Look at Baby Books.** Kids (and adults) love to remember. Get out the baby books and reminisce about the baby stage. Tell stories about what it was like to have a brand new baby.
- **Family Art Project.** Set out a collection of materials. Crayons or colored pencils and paper. Collage materials or paints. Instead of just setting enough space for the kids, make it a family event. We love creating together and I bet you will too.
- **Teach a Skill.** What are you really good at (or kind of good at, but love doing?) Baking? Sewing? Photography? Hold a family workshop and take turns teaching everyone else something new.
- **Take a Bike Ride.**
- **Play Catch.** Or kick the ball back and forth. Or tether ball. Or hopscotch. You get the idea. Get outside and moving together.
- **Watch Home Movies.**
- **Camp at Home.** Do a full on backyard campout, including the tent and roasting hotdogs over the BBQ flames. (Yes we did that. It was very fun.) Or just pull out the sleeping bags and make forts in the living room. Either way... make it a screen free night.
- **Family Science Project.** Learning something new together is a great way to connect. One of my favorite family memories was a day we spent doing egg experiments. It was a blast! I can help you find some fun science experiments the family will love.
- **Take an Evening Walk.**
- **Play Mad Libs.** You can buy a book of Mad Libs to have on hand or you can do an internet search and find some to print out. It's just as much fun now as it was when we were kids.
- **Plant Something.** In your home or in a garden. Plant something that you can tend together.
- **Snuggle and Share memories.**
- **Nature Scavenger Hunt.** Head outside and look for stuff. Take turns being the announcer and telling everyone else what to find.



- **Prepare Conversation Starters.** Getting into the habit of conversation starters is a really great way to connect and get to know each other. You can do a quick internet search for conversation starters based on a theme (or holiday) or use these basic “[getting to know your kid](#)” conversation starters. *Connecting tip:* For easy, no prep conversations try [best and worst](#). It's something we've done since the kids started talking.
- **Make a Family Scrapbook.** Take pictures throughout this challenge or spend a day snapping fun pictures of everyone. Buy an inexpensive album and have fun making a scrapbook together. *Connecting tip:* Make the picture taking process just as special as the scrapbooking and let everyone capture moments that can be included.

