

# 13 WAYS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD'S INTERESTS

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Giving parents and children additional time to spend together has been one of the few bright sides to the pandemic. If your family was home for most of this past year, you're probably more familiar with your child's interests.

Maybe you see signs of talent that you're eager to develop. Maybe you're concerned that they need more constructive options for filling their leisure time. Plus, you may just be tired of hearing that they're bored.

**Whatever stage your child is at, encouraging their interests can enhance their future and deepen your relationship.**

Try these suggestions for helping your child to figure out what they enjoy doing and what they excel at.

### Encouraging Your Child's Interests at Home:

1. **Talk it over.** Your child's passions may be easy to observe, or you may need to work a little harder. Ask them what they like about their favorite things. Listen closely to their answers.
2. **Be flexible.** Are you less excited about dinosaurs than you used to be? **It's natural for kids to outgrow their old passions.** That's especially true if they start hanging out with a new crowd.
3. **Block out free time.** There are actually some advantages to letting kids become bored occasionally. They need unstructured time to do their own critical

thinking and experimenting. Leave some slots open in between soccer practice and piano lessons.

4. **Offer resources.** Create an enriching home environment. Build a rotating collection of books, arts supplies, and educational toys and games.
5. **Mind your budget.** On the other hand, you could go broke trying to keep up with interests that may be expensive and fleeting. Maybe you can rent musical instruments or buy a used mountain bike.
6. **Share your interests.** Talking about your own hobbies is another way for parents and children to bond. Invite your child to join you in cooking a meal or shopping for antiques. **Just be sure to let them make their own decisions, rather than pressuring them to adopt your tastes.**
7. **Provide recognition.** Let your child know that you're proud of their efforts. Display their artwork in your home. Take them out for ice cream or miniature golf.
8. **Maintain balance.** A well-rounded development usually increases the chances for happiness and success. **Teach your child to try a variety of things and juggle different responsibilities.**

#### **Encouraging your Child's Interests Away from Home:**

1. **Ask their teacher.** There may be opportunities to integrate your child's interests into their school curriculum. Talk with their teacher about elective courses, independent study, extra credit work, and after school programs.
2. **Join a club.** Reach out to others with similar pastimes. Search online or check

for resources in specialty magazines and shops.

3. **Schedule a camp.** For an immersive experience, consider a themed camp for aspiring astronauts or amateur gymnasts. Contact your local art and science museums to find out more about their summer programs.
  
4. **Take a vacation. Make your family vacation extra special by letting your child plan activities based on their interests.** Help them to research attractions at your destination. For a road trip, plan a route where you can stop off to see popular beaches and skateboard parks.
  
5. **Visit your library.** For more ideas and resources, you can count on your community library. Check their monthly calendar for children's events and classes. Search the collection for books and other media. See what suggestions the librarians have to offer.

Help your child to pursue their interests, so they can use their strengths and lead an active life. You may also develop a greater appreciation for their individuality and enjoy a more satisfying relationship.