

## Teach Your Kids to Have Fun by Themselves

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### COMMENTARY

Getting a toddler to play quietly for 30 minutes (or more) every day does seem a bit like magic doesn't it? I can still vividly remember having two wild and crazy toddlers on my hands, and for a long time the concept of quiet was like a distant dream, quiet was like a distant dream, until I discovered closet toys.

You see, my house goes crazy from 5pm-7pm. It's like both kids completely lose their minds. I'm cooking dinner, my husband isn't home yet, everyone is getting sleepy and the kids go nuts! One will fuss, and the other will start fussing too, but louder to be sure they get attention first. It's crazy.

This is where the magical thing that I like to call "special closet toys" comes in. I keep a box of toys in our hall closet that ONLY come out when I need time to get something done, like dinner cooked or laundry folded. I take the kids to the closet and let them choose one special toy. They get to play with that toy while I get my work done. The fact that they don't have access to these toys all the time makes them special and exciting to them.

On a normal day they will sit and play by themselves with a closet toy for around 30 minutes. Just enough time to get dinner in the oven! They might come and ask me a few questions or show me what they are doing, but that is much easier to handle than having them constantly under foot, wanting bites of everything I'm preparing and/or fussing for attention.

Anything obnoxiously noisy – SO MANY kid toys come with loud annoying sound effects. I keep the loudest and most annoying in the closet. I can endure squeaking or other undesirable noises for 30mins to an hour if it means I get to make dinner without being interrupted 5,000 times. And keeping those toys in the closet keeps them from being able to drive you crazy with squeakiness whenever they want. It's a win-win!

### Toys with a lot of pieces

Some toys come in "sets" and the little pieces will inevitably get lost if you aren't watching the kids while they play with the toys to be sure everything is put up properly. I keep things like our "little people" house set in the closet, that way all the people, cars, furniture etc. stays together and is more fun to play with!

### Cooking tools

One thing toddler's love is to pretend to cook! I always keep our non-fragile cooking gear down low where the toddlers can reach it. While I cook, they often play with plastic food containers or pots and pans.

You'd be surprised to know how much fun kids can have with something as simple as a big mixing bowl and a whisk or even a set of measuring cups. Keep some specifically for your toddler in the closet and you'll be sure to have a few extra minutes of peace every time you pull them out.

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