

How To Find Hobbies Your Whole Family Can Enjoy

By Audrey Kay

Whether you're looking for a way to spend more quality time together, or a distraction to get your family away from the TV, hobbies are an excellent solution. The key to getting your family interested and motivated is choosing a hobby that seems more like play than work. There are so many fascinating hobbies to choose from, your hardest task may be choosing which one to pursue.

Make a list with each family member's name. Under each list, write down that person's special talents, interests, and any hobbies or collections they may already have. Next, make a list of family trips and activities you have enjoyed together. Think about the activities you enjoyed most and least. Read over your lists carefully and look for clues that might suggest a particular hobby. Call a family meeting to discuss potential hobbies everyone might enjoy.

Visit hobby shops and craft stores with your family and pay attention to the exhibits and products that seem to capture everyone's interest. If you have extra space in your basement or a spare room, designing a model railroad village is great fun. Once the village and basic train are assembled, you can add to the display with items you discover at flea markets and specialty shops, or during your family travels.

Were you involved in assembling model cars, ships, or airplanes as a teen? Let your kids select a new kit and teach them the finer points of model building.

Looking for a long-term project? How about building a tree house or playhouse in the backyard? Involve the family in creating the design, and then visit your local home improvement store for materials and supplies. While mom and dad will have to handle the basic construction, the kids can get involved in sanding, painting, and choosing furnishings.

If your family frequently takes road trips, you might want to start a collection that documents your travels such as souvenir mugs, postcards, snow globes, travel posters, etc.

Nature-related hobbies are fun for the family because they involve outdoor activities. Start a collection of seashells or interesting rocks and get the children involved in creating displays for them.

Bird watching can easily be combined with family hikes at home or on vacation. Buy a couple of sets of binoculars and a guidebook on birds. The kids might enjoy keeping a journal with photos of different birds and details on where and when they were seen.

Growing a specialized type of plant can also be a fun family activity. You might start with a small cactus garden and add to your collection by attending cactus shows and visiting botanical gardens and nurseries. Start a log with cacti you have and others you would like to acquire. Check out books from the library that explain the different types and how to care for them. Many local communities have plant clubs that feature guest speakers and sponsor annual shows and competitions.

Genealogy is a fascinating and educational hobby. You may find that once you start investigating your family tree, it almost becomes an obsession. Assign your children to "interview" relatives and see how many new entries they come up with. Your local library and bookstore can provide additional resources on how to conduct your search.

Scrap booking is an enjoyable way to involve your family in preserving special memories. Instead of displaying pictures from vacations in a photo album, put them in a scrapbook. Use special colored paper on each page and allow each family member to make journal entries with their memories of the trip. Add souvenirs like seashells, amusement park ticket stubs, and other memorabilia.

Most families enjoy visiting flea markets and antique stores. If you have a small collection of Hot Wheels or Pez dispensers, seek out new models to add to your collection and create a shelf system for displaying them. Get a few books that explain how certain series become more sought after, and involve your family in looking for finds to add to the collection.

Stamp collecting and coin collecting are two hobbies that have been around for decades. Your local post office or coin shop can help you get started with tips on how to display and preserve them. There are many books and brochures available that detail the history of coin and stamp collecting and what to look for as you add to your collection.