



105 THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR KIDS!

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Something for everyone

By Erin Huiatt

Valentine's Day is one of my favorite holidays. I remember attending a father-daughter dance every year with my dad. This year businesses and organizations are offering tons of opportunities, including events where Mom is included. Not only are there great ideas this month to do with your children, but there are some date-night opportunities as well. A little something for everyone.

Make sure you check out the website this month for a free printable to use for your Valentine. It is a cute, non-candy way to spread the love this Valentine's Day.

I hope everyone is having a warm and fun winter in central Iowa. Please let me know if you have an event or activity you would like added to our event calendar. ■



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Before heading to any event or activity, please double check times and locations. We try hard to keep everything accurate, but things do change without notice.



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Valentine Sweetheart Dances 2018

It's that time of year to grab your little one and celebrate Valentine's Day. Central Iowa is lucky to have several father-daughter dances including a Mommy and Me dance, too. Check them all out below. Make sure you register quickly as most fill fast.

Fifth Annual Father-Daughter Dance

Saturday, Jan. 27, 6:30-9 p.m.

Christ the King Parish, Des Moines

You are invited to celebrate the fifth Annual Father-Daughter Dance. Have fun and dance the night away in a magical "Under the Sea Enchantment Ball" that she will never forget. The evening will include dinner, desserts, refreshments, a DJ, photo booth and gifts.

Special guest appearances by The Little Mermaid and Moana provided by Little Princess Parties. Cost: \$30 per young lady and escort, \$10 per additional young lady or escort. Escort can be anyone special in the young lady's life — dad, brother, grandpa, uncle, cousin or a male role model. To register visit <https://christthekingparish.org/>.

Father/Daughter Valentine's Dance

Jan. 26, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Jan. 27, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Feb. 2, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Feb. 3, 3-5 p.m.

Feb. 3, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Pinnacle Club at Otter Creek Golf Course

This event provides fathers, grandfathers and father figures an opportunity to take their daughters or granddaughters out for an evening of fun. There will be dancing, door prizes, refreshments and a dessert buffet. Tori's Eye Photography will be present for optional picture packages. \$35 per couple and \$20 for each additional daughter. Must register. Register with Ankeny Parks and Recreation.

Sweetheart Dance

Sunday, Jan. 28, 4-7 p.m.

West Des Moines Sheraton Hotel

A child-friendly, light Italian meal will be served buffet style along with a variety of desserts during the festivities. A video DJ, Thunder and Lightning, will wow the crowd with two huge video screens and family-friendly music. Photos will be available from University Photo for a small additional fee, and a box of conversation hearts will be handed out to each girl at departure. For ages 4-11 years. \$18 per person. Please register with West Des Moines Parks and Recreation.

Father-Daughter Dance

Saturday, Feb. 3, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Science Center of Iowa

Dads are invited to bring their daughter(s) to the annual Father-Daughter Dance being held at the Science Center of Iowa. This event provides an evening of dancing, refreshments, photo opportunities and exhibits at the Science Center for fathers and their daughter(s). A carnation flower will be given to all daughters and a chocolate fondue station with dipping



options will be available for everyone to enjoy. Dads, don't miss out on this memorable opportunity with your daughter(s). Sponsored by the Des Moines Parks and Recreation and Boesen The Florist. Dads can be anyone who is a father figure to a girl: dad, brother, grandpa, uncle, cousin or male role model. \$10 per person. Register with Des Moines Parks and Recreation.

Valentine's Kid's Cooking Class

Thursday, Feb. 8, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Hy-Vee, 555 S.E. 51st St. in West Des Moines

Not a dance, but another fun opportunity to celebrate the holiday with your child. Get in the spirit of love with dietitian Katie in our Valentine's Kids Cooking Class. We will make Valentine's themed treats and crafts and have a lot of fun doing it. Age requirement for kid's cooking classes is 7-13 years old. Class is \$10 per child. To register or for more information, please e-mail klashier@hy-vee.com.

Sweetheart Dance

Friday, Feb. 9, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Blank Park Zoo

Dance the night away with your favorite Valentine. Bring the whole family to Blank Park Zoo for an evening filled with music, sweet treats, crafts and more. DJ provided by Affordable Music and Sound. Member \$12 per person; nonmember \$15 per person. To learn more and to register, visit <https://www.blankparkzoo.com>

Daddy-Daughter Dance

Friday, Feb. 16, 6:30-8 p.m.

Senior Recreation Center, Urbandale

Registration deadline is Feb. 9

Fathers and daughters or grandfathers and granddaughters of all ages are invited to enjoy time together. While a DJ entertains the crowd with great music and fun, a variety of finger foods and desserts will be served during the festivities. Photos will be available at the dance for a small fee. Event fills quickly. Register with Urbandale Parks and Recreation.



Daddy-Daughter Dance
Friday, Feb. 16, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Lutheran Church of Hope, Waukee

An evening of dancing and fun for dads and daughters age 3 through sixth grade. Tickets are \$5 per person or \$20 family max, includes games, dessert and beverages. To learn more and to register, visit <http://www.lutheranchurchofhope.org/waukee/>

Mommy and Me: Sweetheart Dance
Saturday, Feb. 17

1:30-4 p.m. or 6-8:30 p.m.

Holiday Inn Downtown Des Moines

Join Variety Iowa for the fifth annual Mommy and Me: Sweetheart Dance, a Valentine's fundraising event created exclusively for central Iowa mothers and their children to support Variety — the Children's Charity. Celebrate with your own little sweetheart(s) and create unforgettable memories. Enjoy dancing, capturing memories, sampling from appetizers and dessert buffet and getting creative with a craft activity. To register, visit <https://www.varietyiowa.com>. ■



Link to original post:
<https://desmoinesparent.com/valentine-sweetheart-dances-2018/>



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Valentine's Day 2018: Date Night

Looking for a fun and unique date night to celebrate Valentine's Day? Check out some great special events that local businesses and restaurants are offering. Keep tabs on our event calendar for more ideas.

Des Moines Community Playhouse: "Misery"

Jan. 26 – Feb. 11

Make it an early date night and see "Misery" at the Des Moines Community Playhouse. This performance is based on the novel by Stephen King and written by William Goldman. A fun and thrilling way to spend Valentine's Day with your loved one. Purchase your tickets at <https://www.dmplayhouse.com/>.

Partner Valentine Yoga Event

Friday, Feb. 9, 6-7:30 p.m.

New U Yoga Studio

Truly connect with your significant other with this couples yoga class. \$30 a couple. One rose, glass of wine and snacks provided. Register at <https://www.newuyoga.com/>.

Chocolate Walk

Friday, Feb. 9, 5-9 p.m.

West Glen Town Center

\$20 for 10 drink tickets and five chocolate tickets. Come as a couple or as a group of friends to try fun new cocktails and delicious chocolate treats. Participants will be eligible for prize drawings. Visit www.dmcityview.com or <http://bit.ly/2mGO1K1> for more information, or to purchase tickets.



Valentine's Ball 2018

Saturday, Feb. 10, 6-10 p.m.

Summerset Winery

The romance of Summerset awaits you and your special someone. A deliciously memorable meal will be catered by Christiani's while the Big Band keeps the dance floor packed. Our photographer will take a picture of you and your sweetie, and every couple gets a bottle of wine to enjoy with dinner or to take home. \$70 per couple and includes wine reception, dinner, bottle of wine per couple, live music and photo. To reserve your spot visit <https://summersetwinery.com>.

GALentines Day Painting

Tuesday, Feb. 13, 7-9 p.m.

Pinot's Palette

Don't have a date? Don't worry. Gather up your friends and paint with Pinot's Palette this GALentines Day. Reserve your spot at <https://www.pinotpalette.com/>.

Fondue and Wine Night

Wednesday, Feb. 14 or Friday, Feb. 23

Summerset Winery

Freshly prepared fondue and wine. Tickets include fondue, dippers and flight of five Summerset wines. \$45 per person (Valentine's Day \$55). Reservations are required. Reserve your spot at <https://summersetwinery.com>.

Parents' Night Out

Wednesday, Feb. 14, 6-9 p.m.

Pump It Up Urbandale

Drop the kids off and celebrate Valentine's Day with your significant other. Includes jump time, games, pizza and a fun craft project. \$20 per child. Reserve your spot at <https://www.pumpitupparty.com/urbandale>.

Valentine's Day Wine and Chocolate

Wednesday, Feb. 14, 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Della Viti in Ames

Two of my favorite things, wine and chocolate, come together in a delicious evening for you. Amazing wines and mouthwatering chocolates from Chocolaterie Stam. You can't go wrong. \$30. Limited availability. Reserve your spot at <http://www.dellavitiames.com/>.



Valentine's Date Night Painting

Wednesday, Feb. 14, 6-9 p.m.

Pinot's Palette

Paint a funky Winged Heart with your date. You paint one half, and they paint the other. Combined it makes a whole heart. <https://www.pinotpalette.com/>.

Wine and Food Showcase

Friday, Feb. 16, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

Des Moines Marriott Downtown

Featuring nearly 40 of the finest restaurants, wineries and breweries from the metro, the Wine and Food Showcase has become the premier event of its kind in Des Moines and is Des Moines Metro Opera's signature fundraiser. Purchase tickets at <http://desmoinesmetroopera.org/WFS/>.

Blue Ribbon Bacon Festival

Saturday, Feb. 17, 10 a.m.

Iowa Events Center

The 11th Annual Blue Ribbon Bacon Festival will take place at the Iowa Events Center. The celebration will continue in Club Sizzle with an after-party concert featuring Grammy-nominated band Smash Mouth. 2018's theme, "International Bacon Games — Light the Sizzle Within," will pay homage to an internationally celebrated sporting event taking place in South Korea during the same time. Get your tickets at <http://www.iowaeventscenter.com/events/detail/blue-ribbon-bacon-festival>.

Parents' Night Out

Saturday, Feb. 17, 5-9 p.m.

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Going out for a special evening to celebrate Valentine's Day? Drop your kids off for fun at Westminster Presbyterian Church. The cost is \$20 or \$25 at the door per child. For ages infant to 10 years old. There will be fun and games. Learn more at <http://westpres.org/nightout/>.

Cocktails and Comfort Food

Saturday, Feb. 24, 3-6 p.m.

Living History Farms

Pair cocktails mixed by Iowa artisan distillers with bite-sized sweet and savory comfort foods created by local eateries. Visit with distillers about the process of making spirits with Iowa grains. Advanced tickets are available online through Feb. 23 at noon. Tickets may also be available at the door, if not sold out. Vendors include Dehner Distillery and Mississippi River Distilling Company. Purchase tickets at <https://www.lhf.org>. ■



Link to original post: <https://desmoinesparent.com/valentines-day-2018-date-night/>



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A Day of Fun at Merle Hay Mall

Having young children, I can understand the issues with dragging kids out in the cold. You have to bundle them up, get them in their car seats, then get them in and out again depending on how many stops you make. Wouldn't it be great if you could spend an entire day at one spot, keeping your children busy doing all sorts of fun activities?

You may be surprised, but Merle Hay Mall can easily be somewhere you can spend an entire day running, playing, shopping, eating and exploring. Take a look at all the options.

THE PLAY AREA

This may be obvious. Like most malls, there is a fun play area full of climbing options. If you have smaller children, this simple place can provide a couple of hours of fun.



APEX ATHLETICS

Did you know that an all-star cheerleading and tumbling facility is located at Merle Hay Mall? They offer classes, but they also offer a Daytime Playtime and Kids Night Out opportunities.

Daytime Playtime is offered Wednesdays and Fridays 9 a.m. to noon. Come learn and play on the mats, trampoline, obstacle courses, games and more. \$5 per family (cash only). You can drop your kids off or stay and play.

FYI, Target is located just next door. Have a Target addiction? Drop them off and get some much-needed shopping done.

Kids Night Out dates have not been announced for 2018 yet.

Learn more about Apex Athletics at <http://apexathletics.net/>.



FLIX BREWHOUSE

Spend some time playing then catch a movie. Our family is a huge fan of Flix. We love the atmosphere and the yummy food. There is usually always a great family film showing. Reserve your seats at <https://www.flixbrewhouse.com/des-moines>.



MERLE HAY LANES

Bowling is a great family activity. Merle Hay Lanes offers tons of open bowling times and is pretty inexpensive. Play a round or two. To learn more visit <http://www.merlehaylanes.com/>.

Hours

Sunday - Thursday: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.; \$3.25 per person, per game
Friday and Saturday: 10 a.m. to midnight; \$4.25 per person, per game
Shoe rental: \$2.75 per pair



LOCAL EATS

Merle Hay Mall offers a ton of options to eat including Old Chicago and Panda Express. They are known for their unique food court which includes Local Eats. The restaurants are all local. Try something new.



HOP-A-LOT INDOORS

After you eat, right next to the food court is Hop-A-Lot Rentals. You can easily spend hours and hours jumping and running through all the inflatables.

Hours

Monday - Saturday: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Sunday: 12-5:30 p.m.

Pricing

Monday - Thursday: \$6 per kid
Friday - Sunday: \$8.50 per kid
2 and younger (if playing): \$5 per kid ■



Link to original post: <https://desmoinesparent.com/a-day-of-fun-at-merle-bay-mall/>



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Indoor Fun at Hop-A-Lot Rentals

It is winter in Iowa, and central Iowa is filled with indoor places to run, play and explore. We checked out a new location over winter break, and it did not disappoint.

Hop-A-Lot Rentals, which is mainly known for renting their bounce houses and inflatables for parties, has opened an indoor location in Merle Hay Mall. The perfect way to go test out all of their inflatables in one spot.

I was very pleased with how organized it was, especially since we were visiting on a super cold, winterbreak day. There were lots of kids, but it did not seem overcrowded. They offered a limited number of chairs, benches and tables around the room so parents could sit while their children played.

When you pay admission, this includes the entire day. You are welcome to leave and come back. Hop-A-Lot Rentals is located right by the food court, so you can easily grab lunch and return for more jumping. I also saw many families with snacks and drinks within the facility. Make sure you add this to your Winter Bucket List.

Hours

Monday - Saturday: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Sunday: noon to 5:30 p.m.

Pricing

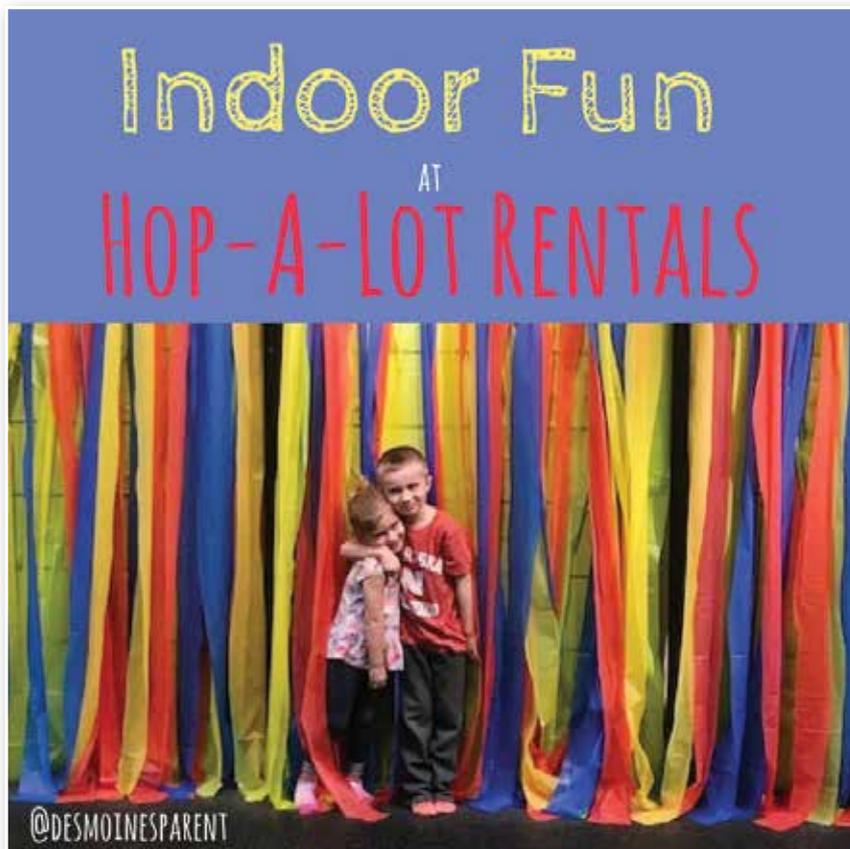
Monday - Thursday: \$6 per kid

Friday - Sunday: \$8.50 per kid

2 and younger (if playing): \$5 per kid

Group of six persons or more: \$5 per kid (grab your friends and go together)

Have a winter birthday? Hop-A-Lot also offers different party packages. Check out their party packages and what they include at <http://www.hopalotrentals.net/hop-a-lot-indoors> ■



Link to original post:
[https://desmoinesparent.com/
indoor-fun-hop-lot-rentals/](https://desmoinesparent.com/indoor-fun-hop-lot-rentals/)



Family Fun at the State Historical Museum of Iowa

As a child, I remember taking field trips several times to the State Historical Museum of Iowa. Recently, I discovered that they have created a hands-on option for children 10 years and younger.

Hands-On History is a great room with lots of fun activities. There are Duplo blocks; a kitchen with pots, pans and food; a place to create rubbings with crayons; a large train table where children can climb under



and pop their head through; and a large tractor to sit on.

There was also an area in the corner with comfy bean bag chairs where a staff member offered to read a book every so often.

After we played for a bit in the Hands-On History area, Amelia noticed the exhibit through the window where there were wildlife dioramas of elk, bison, turkeys and more in the Delicate Balance. We spent time walking through looking at old dolls, looking at a very large tree stump and walking through a coal mine.

When we were done walking through the exhibits on the lower level, we decided to burn off some more energy by climbing the large staircase. If it is a cold day out, this simple activity will for sure wear your children out. Also, there are bathrooms and drinking fountains on every floor. We made sure to stop for a drink at each fountain.

We climbed each level and walked through Hollywood in the Heartland (where we spotted Superman), Riding Through History, and more.

The State Historical Museum of Iowa is free and open:

Monday – Saturday: 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Sunday: Noon to 4:30 p.m.

Make sure to check their event calendar before you visit for special programming and events that may be going on at <https://iowaculture.gov/calendar>. ■



Link to original post: <https://desmoinesparent.com/family-fun-state-historical-museum-of-iowa/>



Can't-miss events around Des Moines



Friday, Jan. 26

Parents' Night Out

Enjoy a night out while your kids enjoy time at Infinity Gymnastics Academy in Urbandale. Need a date night or girls night? Let Infinity Gymnastics Academy entertain your children from 6-9 p.m. For ages 4-12. There will be open gym, games and pizza. \$20 members; \$25 nonmembers. To register call 515-276-4191.



Saturday, Jan. 27

Children's Workshop at The Knotty Nail

The Children's Workshop is 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Participants will create string art on a 6x6 or 4x10 walnut-stained board. All supplies, including unlimited string colors and pattern of choice, will be provided. This workshop is for ages 8 years and older. To learn more and register visit www.theknottynail.com.

Sunday, Jan. 28

Enjoy an afternoon with other moms

Attend Mama Meetup: Henna & Tea at Balance Chiropractic & Wellness in Windsor Heights. Enjoy henna (no cost, but tips required), tea, snacks and the presence of other moms. Event is 1-3 p.m. To learn more visit <https://www.meetup.com/Bellies-Babies-and-Beyond>.



Mama Meetup
HENNA + TEA 



Thursday, Feb. 1 Learn about owls

Join a naturalist from Warren County Conservation Board to learn about owls. Winter is a great time for owl calling in Iowa. Learn how to identify owl calls and hike down the trail to listen for owls in the park. Make sure you bundle up. Event is 7-8 p.m. at the Annett Nature Center. Please register by Jan. 30. To learn more and to register visit <http://www.warrenccb.org/events/owl-prowl/>.

Monday, Jan. 29

Family Bingo

Make it a family night at Chick-fil-A on Mills Civic Parkway. Enjoy dinner and play Family Bingo from 5-7 p.m. Prizes will be awarded. There are no entry fees and all ages are welcome. To learn more visit Chick-fil-A's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ChickfilAMillsCivicParkway/>.





Saturday, Feb. 10 Girls in Science Festival

Join the Science Center of Iowa for the Girls in Science Festival. Explore a variety of careers in the STEM fields and connect with female role models and mentors. Attendees can also register for workshops. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. To learn more, visit <http://www.sciowa.org/>.



Sunday, Feb. 11 Mickey, Minnie and Friends

See your favorite Disney characters for one day only in "Disney Live! Mickey and Minnie's Doorway to Magic" show in Des Moines. Two showtimes are available, 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. To purchase tickets and learn more about the show, visit <http://www.iowaeventscenter.com/>.

Sunday, Feb. 11 Celebrate Valentine's Day at Warrior Lanes

Reserve a lane at Warrior Lanes for glow-in-the-dark-bowling, concert lights and black lights. When you rent a lane, it includes two hours of bowling, shoe rental, one large pizza and pitcher of soda. To reserve your lane, visit <http://warriorlanes.com/>.



Friday, Feb. 23 - Sunday, March 11 "Miss Nelson is Missing"

Miss Nelson's class is the worst in the whole school. Why? She's just too nice. One day, Miss Nelson doesn't show up and the evil substitute teacher Viola Swamp takes her place. Under Swamp's tyranny, the students begin to see the error of their ways. Based on the book by Harry G. Allard Jr. and James Marshall. Several showtimes available. Purchase your tickets at <https://www.dmphayhouse.com>.



Saturday, Feb. 17 Family Dodgeball

Grab the family and head to the Walnut Creek YMCA for family dodgeball. This is a free event open to members and nonmembers. 6:30-8 p.m. To learn more, call Walnut Creek YMCA at 515-22-1888.



For more events around Des Moines, go to www.desmoinesparent.com/event-calendar



Homeschool Programs in Central Iowa

By Lori Joy

Central Iowa has so many different programs for homeschoolers. There are options for every interest, from zoo classes to performances to gym time. Check out this list to find something your kids will enjoy.

APPLAUSE SERIES AT THE CIVIC CENTER

The Des Moines Civic Center Applause Series has shows for ages pre-K through 12th grade. The Applause Series runs from January through May. Each show listing gives the age range the show is geared for. Adults need to accompany children and all children need to be at least 3 years old to attend. When you sign up for a show, remember to check your email for the guide with helpful tips to help incorporate the show into your homeschooling lesson.

Cost \$1; Must be at least 3 years old to attend.

Learn more at <https://desmoinesperformingarts.org/>.

BLANK PARK ZOO HOMESCHOOL SAFARI

Blank Park Zoo has super fun Homeschool Safari classes for homeschoolers. The classes are divided by age with the break up being 5-6, 7-9, and 10-12. The classes are from 1:30-3:45 p.m. on the second Friday of the month. The spring semester dates will be: Jan. 12, Feb. 9, March 9, and April 13.

Cost per class is \$12.80 for members/\$16 for nonmembers

Zoo Keeper

For kids 13-17, the zoo offers a Zoo Keeper for a Day program. This is a program for those who are interested in zoo keeping or working with animals in the future. For more information on dates and cost, contact Angela Tague at atague@blankparkzoo.org. Also, keep an eye out for more information on their Homeschool Day celebrating Earth Day in April. The theme this year will be "Party for the Planet." Learn more at <https://www.blankparkzoo.com/>.

THE BRENTON ARBORETUM NATURE CLUB

While this is not specifically for homeschoolers, due to the timing of this, many homeschoolers enjoy Nature Club. The Brenton Arboretum is a



fun place to explore and hike. Nature Club has a different nature theme each month that the children will explore. During warmer weather it is nice to bring your lunch to picnic near the playscape after Nature Club has ended. Don't forget to wear weather-appropriate play clothes. 10:30-11:30 a.m. on the second Friday of each month

Cost is free to members/ \$5 for nonmembers

Learn more at <http://www.thebrentonarboretum.org/>.

CENTER GROVE ORCHARD

Home School Day

Each fall, Center Grove Orchard offers a special day for homeschool families to visit and explore the farm. Keep an eye out for the 2018 dates on their website at <https://centergroveorchard.com/>. \$7.95 per person ages 3 years and older.

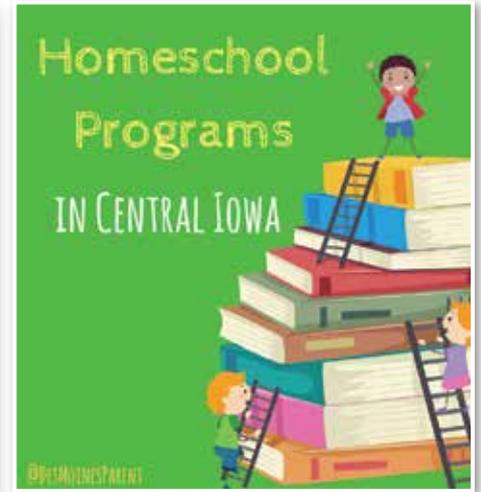
CENTRAL IOWA HOMESCHOOL BAND/INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC CLASSES

Differing from a pre-K and younger elementary vocal-based music course, this is overall instrumental and music theory education — a combination of individual instruction and ensemble participation/interaction. To learn more and register, visit their Facebook page.

DES MOINES PLAYHOUSE

Friday Funday

Interactive theater shows for children ages



4-6. Great for preschools, child care centers, kindergarten classes and families. Join the Clubhouse at the Playhouse Gang each month as they dramatize a favorite story using their imaginations and the costume pieces and props they find in their Magic Trunk. A new story is presented each month, October through April. Children learn the Clubhouse pledge and secret handshake and listen for the word of the day. 9:30 a.m., 10:45 a.m., and 1:30 p.m. on Fridays October through April. Tickets are \$6 for all ages. Learn more at <https://www.dmplayhouse.com/events-and-shows/friday-funday>.

GREATER DES MOINES BOTANICAL GARDEN

The 2018 Homeschool Day will be Friday, Sept. 21, from 10 a.m. to noon and will include guided tours, storytime, discovery stations and other self-led activities.

To learn more visit <http://www.dmbotanicalgarden.com/>.

LIVING HISTORY FARMS

Homeschool Day

Living History Farms has two days each year (June and September) that they devote to homeschooling. Come and explore hands-on all that Living History Farms has to offer. The 2018 dates will be released soon. This program is for all ages.

Online registration opens a month before the date and ends at noon the day before. If you register early, you receive \$1 off admission. The cost for members is free.

Register at <https://www.lhf.org/>.

105 things to do with your kids

By Ashlen Sheaffer, The Kidsperts

Every day, my Facebook updates show friends, acquaintances, family and old co-workers all looking for something to do around the Des Moines area. With two active little boys and a tag-along little girl, we make our way around the city constantly and have our favorite things to do in all seasons. We've had so much fun the last year exploring (there's nothing better than seeing it through your child's eyes) and creating our "adventure days" that we've started To Do Lists for each season.

Here are our top 105 things to do in and around the metro area (and several places out of the city) that we've experienced in the last year and are looking forward to experiencing in the coming months:

1. Go to a movie. Several theaters around the metro have mid-morning showings for parents with small kids (think 10 a.m.) and special family time movies.

2. Science Center.

3. Historical Museum.

4. Jester Park. Hiking trails of all types, and be sure to check out the buffalo and playscape.

5. Ledges State Park in Boone County.

Not in Des Moines, but in central Iowa and is an easy drive from Des Moines.

6. Ashby Park. Toddler playground, tennis courts, playground and swings for older children, and an awesome wading pool. One of our favorite places in the summer.

7. Raccoon River Park. A paved trail to walk along, playgrounds, spray pad and a beach. This is my kids' favorite park.

8. Union Park carousel.

9. Roller skating.

10. Bowling.

11. Skywalk. On those cold winter weekends, we head downtown and let the kids run their energy out in almost four miles of heated skywalk.

12. Flix Brewhouse. Located in Merle Hay Mall, you can order food and beverages (adult beverages even) while you watch a movie. Also, one Saturday a month they have family movie mornings where kids can come in PJs. Great way to watch a movie with little ones.

13. The Blank Park Zoo. Whether it's to just see the animals or to attend one of the zoo's many extra activities they have throughout the year, the zoo is one of our favorite places. Make no mistake, it is no Henry Doorly Zoo

(Omaha), but we've come to be very fond of our little zoo here in Des Moines.

14. Bike trails. Miles upon miles of paved trails in central Iowa. For some exercise and exploration, we set foot on the many trails around.

15. Butterfly garden at Saylorville.

16. Saylorville visitors center.

17. Skyzone.

18. Monkey Joe's. While it's not my favorite place to take the kiddies, it's fun every now and then, and the kids enjoy it (as long as it's not too crowded).

19. Happy Apple Orchard. I recommend apple picking in September or early October.

20. Pammel Park. Another place not exactly in Des Moines, but Winterset is an easy drive from Des Moines.

21. Bridges of Madison County (Winterset).

22. Ashworth Pool.

23. The Art Center.

24. The Botanical Center.

25. Reiman Gardens (Ames).

26. Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad.

Take one of their many train rides and check out the railroad museum while there.



27. Gray's Lake. Walk two miles around the lake, rent paddle boats, play on the playground, swim, or take in a Saturday morning yoga class during the summer.

28. Snookies Malt Shop. Legendary ice cream in Beaverville. This place is rocking the minute it opens April 1 every year until it closes every September.

29. Christopher's Restaurant. If you're looking for a nice dinner and want super kid friendly, I highly recommend this place in Beaverville.



30. Franklin Avenue Library. Story times during the week and numerous other activities for toddlers, preschoolers and students during the week and on the weekends.

31. South Des Moines Sculpture Park.

32. Pappajohn Sculpture Park.

33. Iowa Cubs game.

34. Downtown Farmers' Market.

35. Downtown Winter Farmers' Market.

36. Greenwood Park.

37. Colby Park.

38. Berry picking. I recommend the Berry Patch in Nevada.

39. Feeding ducks. Resthaven Cemetery (WDM) has actual ducks, Glendale Cemetery (DM) has geese. They attack...just an FYI from our most recent experience.

40. Sledding at Waveland Golf Course. Best. Sledding. Hills. Ever.

41. Breakfast at Hy-Vee. Kid friendly, cheap, and gives no excuses for putting off grocery shopping.

42. A play at the Des Moines Playhouse.

43. Backyard Adventures.

44. Trainland U.S.A. (Colfax).

45. The Iowa Children's Museum. So this is in Iowa City, but so worth the two-hour drive.

46. The Learning Post Store. They have amazingly cool and educational toys and products to choose from.

47. Living History Farms.

48. Zombie Burger.

49. The State Capitol Building.

50. Mini golf.

51. Iowa State Fair.

52. St. Patrick's Day parade.

53. Des Moines Arts Festival.
54. Principal Riverwalk.
55. Neal Smith Wild Life Refuge (Prairie City). I recommend walking the 2-mile loop to see the buffalo instead of driving the buffalo enclosure. It's such a large space that there's very little chance of seeing the buffalo from the car. The trail can get you much closer.

56. Ashby Drive during Christmas time.
57. Garage sales. Take a walk around pretty much any neighborhood in the spring and there's garage sales galore. Pick through people's junk to find your next treasure. My kids and I have a blast doing this each year.

58. Adventureland.
59. Beavertdale Fall Festival.
60. Fourth of July parades. There are numerous parades to choose from around the 4th of July holiday.

61. Big Creek State Park. Play on the all-wooden playground (if you're not allergic to bees that is), swim at the beach, or rent boats at the marina.

62. High Trestle Trail bridge. Feel free to bike/walk/run the entire trail, or, if you just want to see the bridge (it is very cool), drive to Madrid. There's a gravel parking lot near the trail. Then head west and walk more than three miles from one end of the bridge to the other.

63. Mall play areas. The play areas open when the malls open for walkers (typically around 8 a.m.). During the weekdays, you can find many unshowered moms with their little ones. The earlier you go on the weekends, the less busy the play areas actually are.

64. Bass Pro shop. So much to do and see.
65. Barnes and Noble book stores. Look at books, pick out books, a small play area, and a café.

66. Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium (Dubuque). Another one not quite in Des Moines, but has some good and fun stuff for kids to see. If you have a zoo pass, you can get in for half of the cost.

67. Iowa Wolves, Iowa Wild, or Iowa Barnstormers game.

68. Ice skating.
69. Jolly Holiday Lights.
70. Festival of Trees and Lights.

71. National Night Out. This is the perfect opportunity to talk to your kids about the importance of police officers and firefighters in your community and the role they play.

72. The Grotto. Not the most fun for young kids (trust me, there's a no-touching-anything policy...that was fun), but would be good for



older kids.

73. Free fishing weekend.
74. The Central Library.
75. Tulip Time Festival (Pella).
76. Java Joes. Seriously, this place. There's a hidden kids clubhouse/play area thingy. Enjoy coffee and let the kids play.

77. Maquoketa Caves State Park (Maquoketa)

78. Walker-Johnson Park.
79. Monte Burr Memorial Garden (Urbandale).

80. Star observation at night. The Science Center goes to metro area parks occasionally (typically in the fall) and has a telescope available for children and adults to take a look.

81. Meals from the Heartland.
81. Indoor waterpark. The only one in Des Moines (that I know of — if you know of another one please do share) is in the Ramada Inn on Merle Hay Road. Get a room for a night and have some water slide fun.

82. Honey Creek Resort.
83. Fly a kite on a windy day. Since I was little, we have gone to Perkins Academy's open field to fly kites. Last time we went, the adults had more fun than the minis, but the minis thoroughly enjoyed running around and throwing the kite in the air.

84. Pumpkin patch. There are many to choose from just outside of the metro. We've been happiest with Howell's (Cumming) or Patch's (Adel — fantastic for young kids). Center Grove Orchard (Cambridge) is extremely popular, but it was overcrowded for our liking.

85. Saylorville spillway at night. So I may have gone there to make out in high school, but it's the perfect place to stargaze on a clear summer night.

86. Camping. Try it out in your backyard or head to one of the many camping grounds outside of the city.

87. Grimes Park and Rec. They have a slew of different children's recreational activities all

year round and at an excellent price. Different pricing for Grimes residents and nonresidents.

88. Drake Relays.
89. Iowa Gold Star museum.
90. Valley Junction. Whether it's just walking the street and admiring the quaint shops, shopping, or partaking in one of the seasonal festivals, take time to enjoy the old West Des Moines.

91. Valley Junction Farmers Market. Every Thursday evening starting in May. Smaller version of the downtown farmers market, but has grown a lot in the past several years.

92. Horseback riding.
93. Movies after dark in the park. Check local parks around the metro for dates, times and showings starting in June.

94. Valle Drive-In Movie Theater (Newton).
95. Topped Donuts (Ankeny). What kid doesn't love donuts? And what adult wouldn't love a maple bacon donut? Walk it off on one of the many walking/biking/hiking trails in Ankeny.

96. Chocolate Storybook (West Des Moines). The kids will be talking about their chocolate factory experience for weeks (or months if they're like mine) afterwards.

97. Spray pad (Legion Park, West Des Moines).

98. Summer concert series. There's numerous concerts to choose from in the summer months.

99. Climb Iowa (Grimes).
100. National Balloon Classic (Indianola). Also, check out the Balloon Museum while in Indianola.

101. Kidsfest. Benefits Children and Families of Iowa.

102. The circus. There's a few that roll through town a couple of times a year. Keep an eye on Wells Fargo Arena and/or Iowa State Fairgrounds events calendars for details.

103. JDRF Walk to Cure Diabetes. Get involved in one (or all) of the many walks/runs/ or fundraisers benefiting a good cause that go on in the metro throughout the year.

104. Skateboarding.
105. Family Fun Night (Valley West Mall). Be prepared — it can get insanely crowded in the winter months. ■



Link to original article:
<https://desmoinesparent.com/105-things-to-do-in-des-moines-with-your-kids/>



Skate North: Toddler Fun

By Laura Lacina

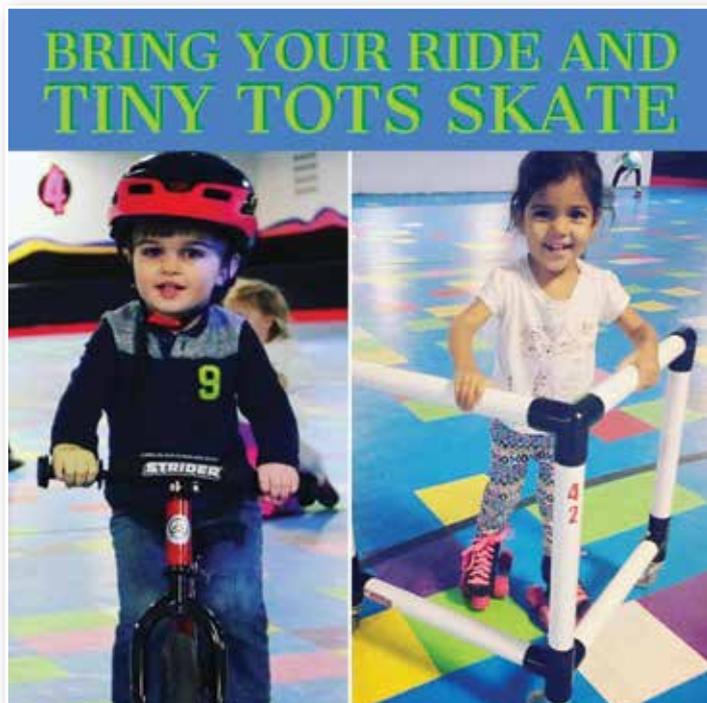
Taking more than one toddler in public has its challenges. If you've tried it, you know it's a gamble to do something fun with a happy outcome for all. My husband and I took our son and his best buddy, both of whom are 2 years old, to Skate North Incrediroll in Des Moines for their Tiny Tot Skate.

When we arrived, we were greeted by a friendly and helpful employee. She was concerned about how small our boys were, because the smallest skate they have is a size 8. But since our son's buddy is size 7, we thought we'd risk it, and it turned out well.

She brought our skates and little "walkers," or skate mates, made of PVC pipe, for the boys to use while they learned to balance themselves. We were two of the three kids there, so we basically had the place to ourselves, which is good, since falls and crying were both inevitable.

When I think of roller rinks, I think of where I went as a kid, when my mother would drop me off for a couple of hours to skate around with my friends. I fully expected a lingering stale cigarette smell and mildly sticky floors. Since we were with toddlers, we spent a fair amount of time on the floor, and I was impressed with how clean the entire facility was. There was no 20-year-old cigarette smell or even a weird concession stand scent. It didn't even smell like dirty feet from the skates. It was a great experience.

The employee that greeted us was so encouraging and kind the entire time. As she was helping us put our skates and skate mates away as we



were leaving, she mentioned that since the boys are so little, they may enjoy the event "Bring Your Ride, It's Toddler Time" from 10-11 a.m. on Wednesdays. Admission for that is \$2 plus \$2 for skate mates — and toddlers can bring their riding toys and ride around.

This is one of those great events parents are always looking for. It's geared towards young children, it's a huge space with plenty of seating, and it's indoors, which of course everyone is looking for this winter. We will definitely go back.

Toddler fun on Wednesdays: Bring Your Ride, It's Toddler Time: 10-11 a.m. Bring your push toy, bike, etc. and burn off some energy indoors. \$2 admission.

Toddler & Family Buck Night: 4-5 p.m. Admission \$1, roller skates \$1, in-line skates and skate mates \$3 each. Open to ages 10 and younger and older siblings with parental supervision. Normal Buck night is 5-8 p.m. and you have the option to stay at no extra cost.

Skate North Incrediroll is located at 5621 Meredith Drive in Des Moines. ■



Link to original article:
[https://desmoinesparent.com/
skate-north-toddler-fun/](https://desmoinesparent.com/skate-north-toddler-fun/)



Valentine's Day with Farm Baby Foods



Valentine's Day is just around the corner, and if you are like me, I am not ready for more candy in the house. We are still digging our way through Easter and Halloween candy from last year.

This Valentine's Day, I will be handing out non-candy items. There are some really fun and unique ideas on Pinterest. While browsing through Pinterest one evening, I came across the cutest one, "You Are Awesome Sauce." I thought it was so much fun, easy and healthy at the same time.

Do you know what is even better than a non-candy Valentine? Supporting local while giving.

Farm Baby Foods was created right here in Des Moines and offers food pouches and other stages of baby food. This food is not just for babies. You can order and have them delivered right to your door, or you can pick them up at a Hy-Vee near you.

I have teamed up with Farm Baby Foods to offer you a special discount for your Valentine's this year. Follow the directions below to print off the Valentines below and attach them to your favorite Farm Baby Foods pouch. They have so many options to choose from including sweet potato, apple and strawberry, apple and carrot, and of course just apple.

Print off your Valentine's tags by visiting <https://desmoinesparent.com/valentines-day-with-farm-baby-foods>.

Receive 15 percent off your Farm Baby Pouches by using promo code `desmoinesparent`. This code is only good on the Farm Baby Foods website at <https://www.farmbabyfoods.com/>. ■





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Science City at Union Station

Our family had the opportunity to take a trip about 2.5 hours south to attend Winterfest at Worlds of Fun in Kansas City. We decided to make a fun-filled weekend out of it. We visited the Union Station, Science City and Crown Center. One of the many highlights was Science City at Union Station.

In December, Union Station and Crown Center are decked for the holidays, and you could not help but enjoy the holiday cheer. We parked at Union Station and took pictures by the gigantic, decorated tree and Santa's sled. We stopped by the addicting chocolate shop, Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory. Union Station also offers a couple of restaurants, a cute cafe, and more.

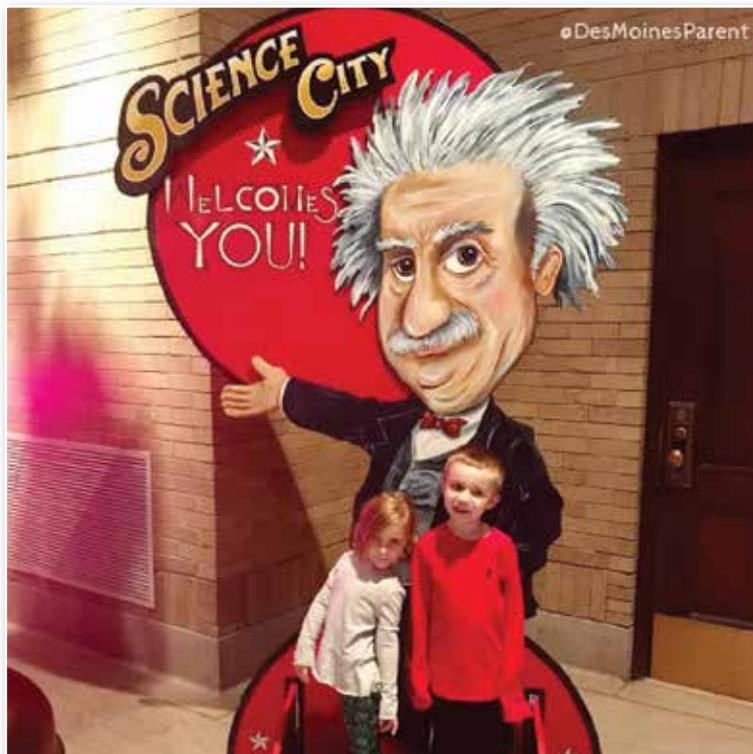
Science City was the next stop. As you enter, you walk through an amazing store filled with all sorts of unique gifts. We could have easily spent an hour in there. I was not sure what to expect, but wish we would have planned to stay an entire day, because it was loaded with fun exhibits.

When you enter the main part of Science City, well, it is like you have entered a little city indoors. It is filled with hands-on exhibits, a tree house, a makerspace, place to build, bubbles, a playground, and much more.

The kids enjoyed pumping air to race cars.

The graffiti room was fun to run through. The kids were in awe by the bright neon colors.

Monte loved the huge dinosaur.



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Financial Services Professional

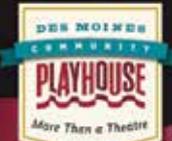
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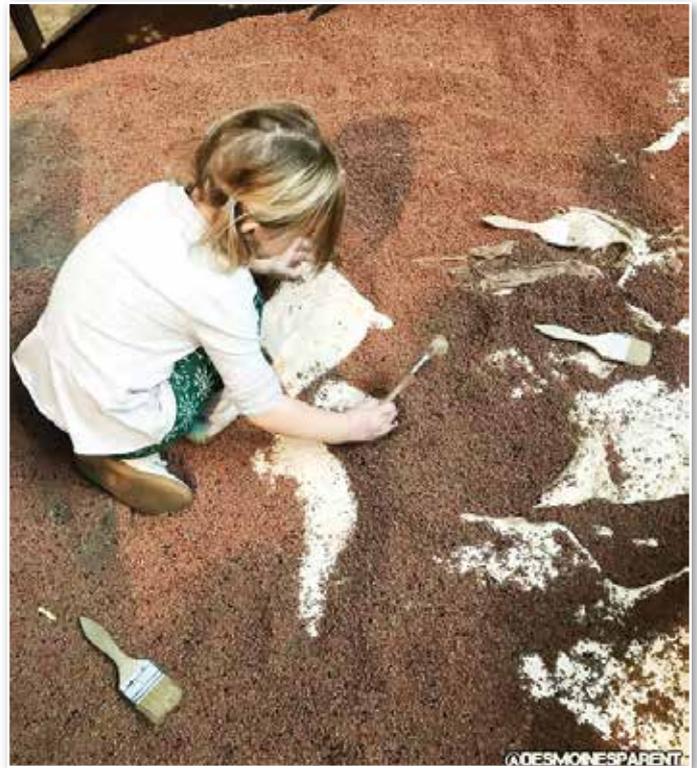
The kids could have spent hours climbing and running around the indoor playground.

The gigantic, winding treehouse was tons of fun to climb.

Digging for fossils in the dig pit was great. They found lots of interesting items.

Our favorite activities were outdoors. Luckily, it was an abnormally warm day, 60 degrees in December. The kids loved the zipline and huge climbing tower.

After we explored for a few hours, we decided to take The Link across to Crown Center and eat lunch. Crown Center offers tons of shopping and restaurants. Since it was a gorgeous day, we wandered outside across



the street to check out the tree and all the fun things they had to climb on. The area was filled with kids running around and playing. There was also an ice skating rink, LEGoland and Sea Life Aquarium right there as a part of The District.

You can easily spend a long weekend in this area. So much to see and do.

Science City Hours & Admission

Tuesday – Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday: Noon to 5 p.m.

Cost: \$13.25 (plus tax) for ages 3 and older

Are you a Science Center of Iowa member? You get in free. ■





*Link to original article:
<https://desmoinesparent.com/science-city-at-union-station/>*



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The Best Yoga Poses for Kids

By Sara J. Weiss, Author of "Go Go Yoga for Kids"

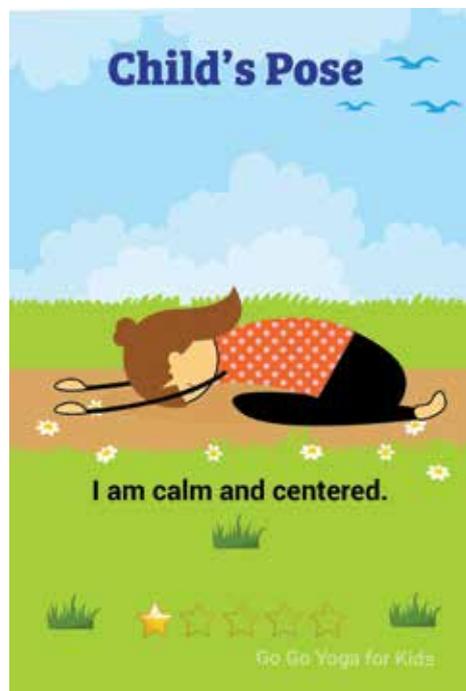
It is no secret that kids need yoga now more than ever. In our technology and screen-focused world, yoga provides many benefits that kids might have difficulty receiving elsewhere.

Physically, yoga enhances flexibility, strength, coordination and body awareness. Mentally, it improves the sense of calmness, concentration, and relaxation. Introducing children to yoga at an early age can help them learn healthy lifestyle habits and set the foundation for a fit future.

The following three yoga poses were selected for their physical and mental health benefits in young growing bodies. These poses are also wonderful for getting kids fit, flexible, and focused. Keep in mind that these are also adult yoga poses, so some of them may already be familiar to you. This is all the more reason to do them together with your children. You do not need to have a lot of space to practice these poses, and they only take minutes a day to generate results.

CHILD'S POSE

While on your hands and knees, stretch your arms and bring your forehead to the floor. Breathe deeply in and out through your nose. This is a very centering and grounding pose. This pose is also perfect when you or your child get overstimulated, anxious or overwhelmed.



It is important to remember the deep breaths. Child's Pose is also a wonderful calming posture before bedtime.

DOWN DOG POSE

Begin on all fours in a table-top position. Spread your fingers and press your palms flat onto the ground. Straighten your legs and make an upside-down V shape. Relax your head and neck and look between your legs.

This is one of my favorite yoga poses for kids because it builds strength within their entire body. Their arms, legs, shoulders and stomach are all working. I like to tell children that they are getting taller as this pose lengthens their hamstrings. Kids love hearing this.

TREE POSE

Stand up straight and tall. Look on the ground or find a spot that is not moving to focus on. It is very important to tell children to look at the ground as that will help them keep their balance. Sometimes I will place a stuffed animal, sticker, or another object on the ground to help children find their focus. Next, place your hands at heart center. Slowly bend your knee and place your foot on the inside of your other leg. Then you can raise your branches (arms) up in the air.

Balance can be tricky for children (and

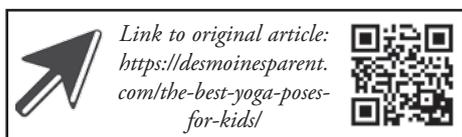


adults), but with practice it can be improved and maintained.

Have fun practicing these poses with your child. A child who learns yoga, mindfulness, and relaxation will be developing essential skills for a lifetime of health and wellness.

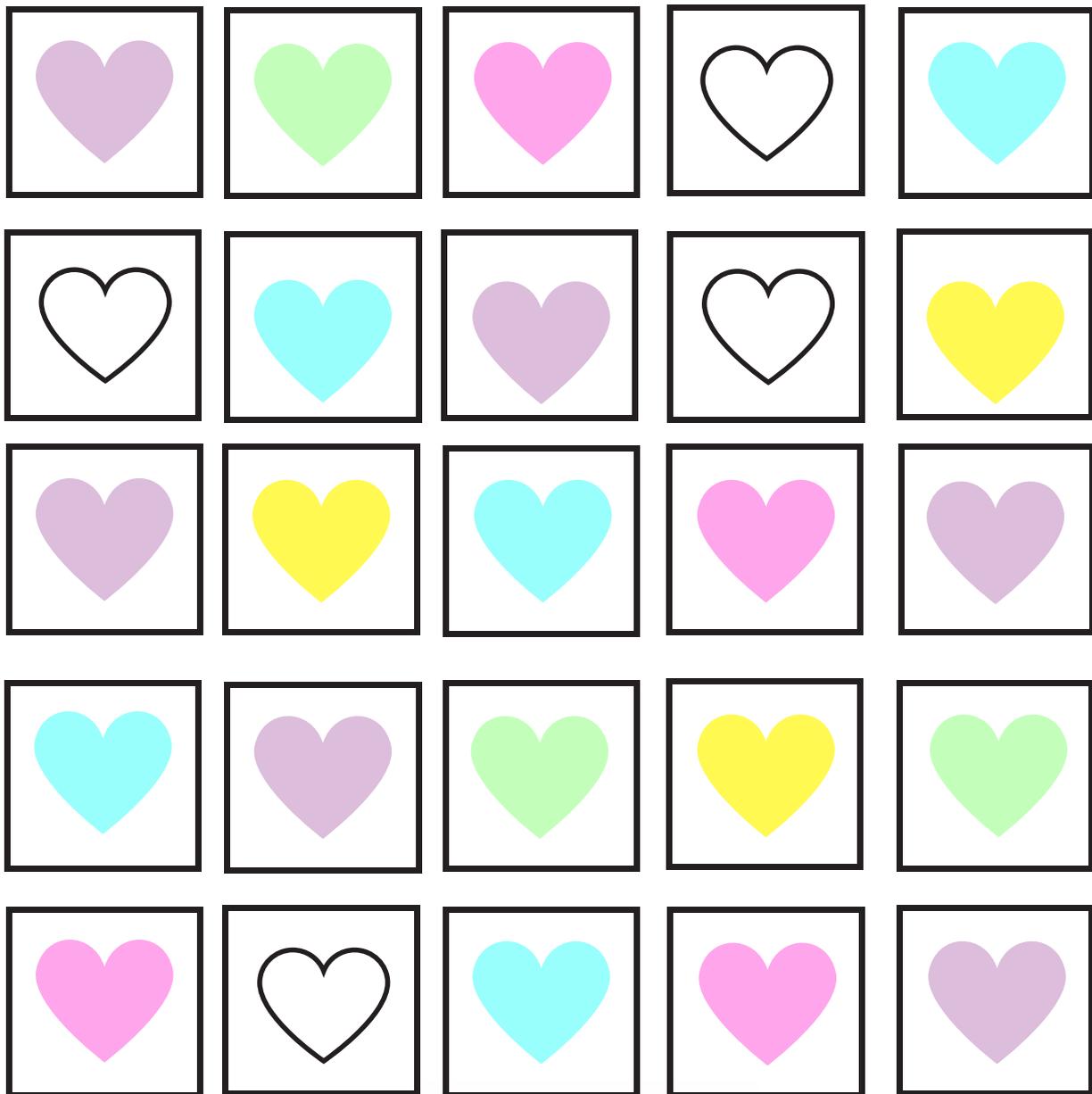
Get your full color print-out of the Top Nine Yoga Poses for Kids at <http://www.gogoyogakids.com/>.

Download the Kids Yoga Challenge App. Compatible with iPhone and Android devices. ■



Valentine COLOR MATCH

Grab a box of Sweetheart Conversation Heart candy and have your child match the colors. If your children are older and are learning to read, write in different sayings and have them match the sayings!



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