



Building Blocks in Families & Neighborhoods

Making Time Count



If you talk with young people about using their time constructively, you'll probably hear one of two common refrains.

One is, "So much to do, so little time." That sign is most likely to come from a young person with lots of opportunities—like teams, clubs, youth centers, and music lessons—to choose from.

The other is, "Oh, there's nothing to do!" That groan is most likely to come from a young person who hasn't yet discovered, or for some reason can't access, the activities he or she would enjoy.

The key is to help young people strike a balance between unstructured activities and structured ones. Young people's activity options may range from being at home (alone or with family or friends, studying, doing chores, or relaxing) to participating in school-sponsored activities (such as teams or clubs), hanging out in public places or at friends' homes, or attending youth groups or centers, music lessons, or religious services.

At their best, activities for young people involve learning, developing new skills, using their creativity, being with other caring youth and adults, and interacting with their families and friends in positive ways.

Here are some keys to constructive use of time:

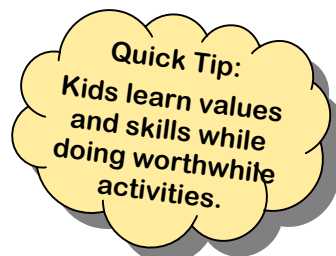
↔ **Balance is essential.** Too much involvement can lead to stress, anxiety, and too little personal time. Too little involvement can be a sign of depression, isolation, or some other unhealthy situation.

↔ **Young people need opportunities to play and be creative.** Studies show that time spent in play and games declines by more than half as children mature into adolescence. Involvement in music, arts, and sports can encourage youth to tap into their playful, spontaneous energy.



↔ **Different young people need different things.** For an extroverted member of the debate team, quiet time in nature might seem intimidating or scary at first. For a shy person not involved in any school clubs or activities, a one-on-one apprenticeship in glassblowing or car repair might be just the ticket to a new interest.

↔ **Adolescents want and need to "try on" different ways of being.** A young person who struggles and feels out of place in school may excel and be a leader in a less traditional setting, building a sense of competence and confidence not experienced anywhere else.



The Four Building Blocks of Constructive Use of Time

#17 Involved in music, theatre or other arts

#18 Involved in youth/school clubs or sports

#19 Regularly attends religious services or activities

#20 Regularly spends time at home with family

Dinner Conversation

- ☺ If you could choose any two activities to be involved in, what would they be?
- ☺ What is your favorite activity?



Time Use through the Years

Ages	Ways to Make the Most of Youth's Time
0-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give babies a change of scene now and then. Move the rocking chair to a different room or take a walk outside.
2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have consistent times for sleeping, feeding, playing, and relaxing. • Spend time outdoors every day.
4-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find simple household chores that children can do together.
6-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let children experiment with different activities they like.
11-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate with adolescents the amount of time they spend "hanging out." Is it balanced with time at home, in activities, and at school?
16-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help teenagers think about how time spent on different activities helps or hinders in reaching goals. • Encourage at least one activity in teens that may continue into their adult years.

What Congregations Offer

Block #19: Regularly attends religious services or activities

Search Institute researchers found that young people who are involved in a religious congregation are more likely to grow up healthy than kids who aren't involved.

Other research has uncovered similar findings. In fact, research suggests that religious institutions help young people develop in healthy ways in at least three areas:

1 They reduce risky behaviors—Although young people who are involved in congregations can be found smoking, drinking, or engaging in other risky behaviors, researchers found that their levels of at-risk behavior are lower than among kids who aren't active in congregations.



2 They help build a values base—Religious institutions strongly emphasize positive values. That's why it's important to choose a congregation wisely. When you find a congregation that emphasizes what your family values, your kids are more likely to internalize these values and make responsible decisions.

3 They expose young people to more people—Many community programs attract people of one age or one interest. A congregation attracts people of all ages with all kinds of interests and skills. Your child can meet other caring adults and young people who share similar values.