

Patch's Toy Chest

Affordable Family Fun

Everyone likes to have fun. And sure, we would all love to have a bottomless bank account with which to have fun with our families—trips to amusement parks, weekly movie viewings at large theaters, vacations in exotic locations, live concerts, sporting events, you name it. But the reality is that most families have budgets, and those budgets don't include too many lavish trips or events. So, how can we have fun without breaking the bank? We can play board games!

Sure, board games cost money, too, but you can generally find a good one for \$25 or less. In most cities, a family of four couldn't get into a movie theater for \$25. And, to fill most vehicles with a tank of gas costs more than \$25. So, for an affordable amount of money, you can institute a game night for the family—pick up a new board game and a yummy snack and you're set! And, that \$25 board game you buy can be used over and over and over again! You can even try trading and sharing with other families so your game selection grows without having to spend as much cash. Switch with the neighbor and try each other's games, or maybe go in "half-sies" on a new game and take turns playing (or play together—the more the merrier)!

You may be skeptical about playing board games with your family: kids can be resistant, sibling may not see eye to eye, grandma may be cranky, etc. However, if you find the right board game (one everyone will enjoy) or take turns playing each family member's favorite, your family may just crack a smile, laugh and just flat out have fun! Try setting aside some time once a week and make it a new family tradition to play board games. It's a great way to connect with your family and enjoy spending time together. Board games encourage interaction and cooperation, which are two things families need! You can play board games that are strictly for fun and laughter, or you can find board games that add some strategy or learning benefit—there's something out there for every family!

While you're having fun playing, why not keep track of how long you play and you can take part in the Million Minute Family Challenge™? Log on to millionminute.com and check it out. It's free to join and the website gives some great ideas to make game nights even better. You just add your minutes of game play to the tally, and together with hundreds of other groups across the United States and Canada, try to reach one million minutes of game play! It's a great motivator for playing more games.

So, while we all work and save so we can take the occasional family vacation or pile in the car for a trip to the movies, the in-between times can still be filled with tons of family fun! Just pick up a board game and start playing together...let the good times begin!

