



## Winter Holiday Sanity Savers

Need 30 minutes of entertainment?

Pick an activity to bust the boredom

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #1

### Indoor Treasure Hunt

Create an **indoor treasure hunt** using things already around the house.

- ✓ Hide 5 to 10 items
- ✓ Write simple clues
- ✓ Let tamariki work together to find them
- ✓ Take turns being the clue maker

You can make it as easy or challenging as you like, and it's a great way to encourage problem solving and teamwork.

**Cost:** Free

**Bonus:** The kids are occupied while you enjoy a hot drink.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #2

### Blanket Fort

Couch cushions + blankets + chairs =  
holiday magic.

Once the fort is built, it can become:



A reading nook



A games room



A movie theatre



A teddy bear campsite

Sometimes the simplest activities  
create the best memories.

Cost: Free





Bonus: It doesn't matter if it's raining  
outside.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #3

### Science!

Turn your kitchen into a science lab.

Try:

-  Baking soda and vinegar reactions
-  Skittle colour experiments
-  Ice melting challenges
-  Guessing games using household items

Learning and play can happen together and don't have to cost a fortune.

**Cost:** Low to no cost

**Bonus:** Curiosity does most of the work for you.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #4


### Family Challenge

Set a timer and challenge the family to:

 Build the tallest tower from recyclables,

 Create artwork from old magazines,

 Design the funniest sock puppet,

 Put on a talent show

No prizes needed. The laughter is usually enough.

**Cost:** Free

**Bonus:** Great for mixed ages.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #5

### Scavenger Hunt

Wrap up warm and head outside.

Try a scavenger hunt:



Find five different leaves



Count birds you spot



Find something interesting in nature



Take photos of your discoveries

Fresh air and movement can be a great reset for both children and adults.

**Cost:** Free

**Bonus:** Helps burn off some holiday energy.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #6

### Movie Night

Transform an ordinary movie night into an event.

 Make tickets

 Create a snack station

 Build a cosy viewing area

★ Let a different family member choose the movie each time

It's an affordable way to spend quality time together.

Cost: Low cost


Bonus: Minimal preparation required.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #7

### Family Challenge

Before you recycle that box, put it to work.

Challenge tamariki to turn it into:

 A house

 A rocket

 A car

 A letterbox

 A puppet theatre

There are no rules and no right answers.  
Just imagination.

**Cost:** Free

**Bonus:** Keeps little hands busy for longer  
than many toys.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #8

### Baking!

You do not need fancy ingredients to create a memorable afternoon.

Try baking:

 Biscuits

 Muffins

 Bread

 Homemade pizza

As a bonus, baking helps children practise maths, reading and following instructions.

Cost: Low cost

Bonus: Afternoon tea is sorted.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #9

### Family Challenge

Need the house tidied without a battle?

Set a timer for five minutes and turn it into a game.



Who can pick up the most toys?



Which room can be tidied fastest?



Can the whole whānau beat the timer?

Short bursts often feel more achievable than one big clean up.

**Cost:** Free

**Bonus:** Less mess for everyone.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #10

### Library Visit

Your local library is one of the best free holiday resources around.



Borrow books



Play games



Check out holiday activities



Access free digital resources

A visit can easily fill an hour or two without spending a cent.

**Cost:** Free

**Bonus:** Everyone gets to choose something they enjoy.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #11

### Memory Container

Grab a container and fill it with memories from this winter.

Include:

 Drawings

 Photos

 Notes about favourite memories

 Tickets or keepsakes

Choose a date to open it in the future.  
It's a simple way to celebrate the small moments that matter.

**Cost:** Free


**Bonus:** Creates a keepsake the whole whānau can enjoy later.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #12

### Dinner Party

Let tamariki help plan dinner using ingredients you already have.

They can:

 Choose the vegetables

 Help build the menu

 Assist with simple preparation

Giving children a role often makes them more excited about eating what is served.

**Cost:** No extra cost

**Bonus:** Shares the workload and builds confidence.


## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #13


### Kindness Mission


Set a daily kindness mission.

Ideas include:

 Make a card for someone

 Call a grandparent

 Help with a household job

 Do something kind for a sibling

Small acts of kindness help strengthen connections and build a sense of belonging.

**Cost:** Free

**Bonus:** Supports empathy and wellbeing.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #14

### Reverse Hide & Seek

A twist on a classic game.

One person hides.

Everyone else searches.

When a child finds the hidden person, they quietly join them in hiding until only one seeker remains.

It's simple, fun and surprisingly entertaining for all ages.

**Cost:** Free

**Bonus:** Works indoors on wet winter days.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #15

### Museum of Strange Things

Invite tamariki to create a museum using random household objects.

★ A potato peeler becomes an ancient treasure.

★ A sock becomes a rare artefact.

★ A broken toy becomes a fossil.

Create labels and charge family members admission (play money accepted).

**Bonus:** Great for storytelling and imagination.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #16

### The Floor Is Lava... But Educational

Place sticky notes around the house with challenges.

Every safe spot contains a task:



Hop 10 times



Pretend to be an elephant



Sing a song



Solve a riddle

Getting around the house becomes an adventure.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #17

### Tiny House Village

Using books, blocks, boxes and recyclables, build an entire miniature village.

Add:



Then invent stories about the people who live there.

This can keep some children occupied for hours.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #18

### Neighbourhood Nature Detectives

Give everyone a mission:

Find:

- 🔍 Something shaped like a heart
- 🔍 Three different shades of green
- 🔍 Something older than you
- 🔍 Something that makes you smile

A regular walk instantly becomes an exploration.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #19

### Secret Agent Training Academy

Today's mission:



Crawl under laser beams (string)



Crack secret codes



Deliver confidential messages



Complete obstacle courses

Award agent licences at the end.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #20

### The Time Travellers' Club

Pick a time period.



Pirates.



Dinosaurs.



The future.



The Stone Age.

Spend an hour pretending you live there.

What would you eat? Wear? Build?

Imagination does all the heavy lifting.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #21

### The Great Family Invention Challenge

Ask:

"What does the world need?"  
Then build it from recyclables.

Examples:



A tea delivering robot



A sock sorting machine



A pizza alarm



A self carrying school bag

Present inventions on a "dragons' den"  
style panel.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #22

Become a YouTuber  
(Without The Internet)

Create a pretend cooking show.

Nature documentary.

News report.

Talent show.

Sports commentary.

Parents are often surprised how long  
children will happily "film" imaginary  
episodes.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #23

### Mystery Box

Place random household items in a box.

Everyone must create something using only those items.

The stranger the combination, the better.

A whisk, a peg and a tea towel could become almost anything.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #24


### Family Escape Room

Hide clues around the house.

Each clue unlocks the next challenge.

The final clue leads to:

 A snack

 A game

 A movie choice

 A family crown

No special equipment required.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #25

### The Kindness Spy Mission

Everyone secretly draws a family member's name.

Your mission:

♥ Help them

♥ Encourage them

♥ Do kind things without being caught

Reveal identities at the end of the day

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #26

### The World's Worst Art Competition

The goal is not to make good art.

The goal is to make the most ridiculous art possible.

Draw with your non dominant hand.

Create a portrait without looking at the paper.




Use only circles.

The laughter is usually worth more than the artwork.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #27

### Family Podcast

Ask some big questions:

-  What was your funniest memory?
-  What superpower would you choose?
-  What makes a good friend?

Record voice notes and listen back later.

It's amazing what tamariki share when they're being interviewed.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #28

### The Family Currency Challenge

Create your own family currency for the day. Tamariki design the money, give it a name, and decide what it's worth.

They can earn it through things like:

- 💰 Making someone laugh
- 💰 Reading a book
- 💰 Helping with a household task
- 💰 Being kind to a sibling

At the end of the day, they can "spend" it on things like choosing a game, picking dessert, or selecting the family movie.

Cost: Free

Bonus: Sneaks in creativity, maths and problem solving.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #29

### One Word Story Adventure

Sit in a circle and tell a story together, but there's a catch.

Each person can only say one word at a time.

The story might start with:

"Once..."

"A..."

"Penguin..."

"Discovered..."

You never know where it will end up.  
The sillier the story becomes, the better.

Cost: Free

Bonus: Equal parts chaos, teamwork and laughter.

## Winter Holiday Sanity Saver #30

### The Mystery Tape Trail

Using masking tape, painter's tape, string or wool, create a trail through the house.

The trail can:

- Go under tables
- Around chairs
- Through doorways
- Over obstacles

Tamariki must follow the path from start to finish to discover a surprise at the end. The surprise could be a joke, a snack, a challenge, or simply a family hug.

Cost: Very low cost

Bonus: Surprisingly captivating and easy to set up on a rainy day. ❤️