How I Work From Home With My Two and Four Year Old
By Coleen Armstrong-Yamamura

My daughters and I created a list of the activities they love to do—that don’t require an adult. We use the list we created together to maximize their creativity and independent play and minimize the need for screen time during my work day.

How it works:
- At the start of my work day, they pick their first activity from the list and they’re off!
- Once they finish with an activity, sometimes they self-direct to another.
- If they come to me we look at the written list together and then they can pick their next activity. I help them get set up if need, or they just go off and start that play.

I find I get 30mins-1 hour out of each of these activities. Sometimes less, sometimes more. It is helpful for me to break my work day schedule into similar blocks of focused time (30-1hour) to align with their needs and actually be productive with my work goals.

When they want my attention:
If the girls start asking me over and over when I’ll be done working, I tell them I’ll take a break and be present with them in X amount of time. I set a timer and that usually lets me get whatever I was working on done as they occupy themselves waiting for the timer to go off. I take a 10-15min break with them—setting another timer so it is objective. I try to be 100% present with them during that break time. Usually by the time it is over, they are ready to play independently again.

The tradition in our house is that they don’t get to have screen time until I am cooking dinner. We are very consistent with this so the girls don’t push back on this very much. This tradition is broken if a when I have a client call or a conference call that can’t be interrupted.

Independent Play Activities 2-5
Indoor:
- Drawing/stickers—paper, markers, crayons, stickers
- Crafting—painters tape, toilet paper rolls, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, cardboard boxes, anything else laying around
- Puzzles
- Play Dough
- Blocks/Legos/Magna-tiles
- Stuffed Animal/Doll Imaginative play—Doctor/School/House etc.
- Make bracelets or necklaces—pipe cleaners and beads
- Dress-up
- Build a Fort

With siblings:
- Play Hide and Seek
- Freeze Dance
- Dance Party

**Outdoor Independent Play Activities 2-5**
- Tea Party
- Water play
- Play restaurant
- Paint
- Make flower and leaf bouquets
- Build Fairy houses
- Chalk art
- HopScotch
- Wand making—out of sticks, painters tape, ribbon, etc.

With Siblings:
- Play catch/ kicking ball game
- Play tag
- Low to the ground obstacle course

**Conference call with Clients or can’t be interrupted for 30mins-1 hour:**
- PBS subscription is magic for the 2-5 age group. Programming that is slow-paced and mostly filled with good messages/lessons for kids. Daniel Tiger is a family favorite.
- My friend swears by Sparkle Stories—they are kid podcast stories