How to Build a List of Boredom Busters for Ten-Minute Gaps

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Turn waiting time into chosen time: audit a week of gaps, sort activities by energy and minutes, and carry twelve boredom busters you actually use.

Things you will need

- A6 sketchbook with a soft cover
- Clipped pencil or small mechanical pencil
- Standard poker deck with matte finish
- Metal tin to keep card corners alive
- Paperback you are willing to abandon
- Twenty three-by-five index cards
- Fine-tip pen that writes on cards
- Coiled speed rope with handles
- Paper clip to mark the low-energy cards
- Small notebook for recipe and project lists
- Kitchen timer or timer app
- Printed note of your ten-minute walking loop
- Hoop and starter fabric for a sampler
- Shallow tray or hook by the front door

Audit the Gaps and Name What You Actually Feel

1. **Tell Boredom Apart From Low Energy**
   Before you build anything, name which problem you have.
2. **Log Seven Days of Every Gap**
   For one week, write one line each time you catch yourself waiting: start time, location, minutes, and what you actually did.
3. **Leave Two Gaps a Week Empty**
   Choose two short waits from the log and refuse to fill them: no phone, no podcast, no shopping tab, just five or ten minutes of restlessness watched until it moves on.
4. **Sort Ideas by Minutes and Energy**
   Drop every activity you thought of this week into a grid: three, ten, or thirty minutes down one side, and low, medium, or high energy across the other.
5. **Set Phone Defaults So You Stop Deciding**
   Design the phone once so a gap never becomes a debate: turn on grayscale, which drains the color that makes icons magnetic; strip the first home screen to four utilities such as maps, camera, notes, and a timer; bury social apps in a folder on a later page; set a fifteen- or twenty-minute daily cap on the two apps you open most; and switch off notification badges for anything that is not a person.

Write Twelve Cards You Will Actually Use

6. **Write Twelve Cards in One Sitting**
   Set a forty-minute timer and write twelve entries on three-by-five index cards, one activity per card,

in a fixed format: name, minutes needed, energy level, and first move.

7. Give Each Card a Two-Minute First Move

The cost of any activity is front-loaded onto starting, so give every card a first move of about two minutes that requires no thinking.

8. Stock Three Low-Energy Entries on Purpose

Deliberately write three cards you can do seated, standing in one spot, or lying down: five slow breaths with a longer exhale, thirty photos sorted and duplicates deleted, plants watered after a finger test of the soil, one chapter read and then closed, or two minutes of ankle and shoulder rolls.

9. Keep the Cards Inside the Gap Itself

A list that lives in your hallway never meets the dentist waiting room, so split the twelve across the places the gaps happen: six folded in your wallet or phone case, three in the work bag, three in the kitchen drawer by the kettle, one set in the car door pocket, and one taped inside a cupboard at home.

10. Tally Usage, Then Prune the Weak Entries

For two weeks, add one tally mark to the back of a card each time you use it, then spend ten minutes reading the numbers.

Stock a Kit and One Tidy Place

11. Pack a Pocket Kit Under 500 Grams

Assemble one kit that survives being thrown in a bag: an A6 sketchbook, a clipped pencil, a standard poker deck, a paperback you have permission to abandon, and a speed rope that coils to the size of a fist.

12. Give the Kit One Home by the Door

Choose one landing spot within arm's reach of the door you leave most often: a hook, a shallow tray, or a shelf no wider than 30 centimeters.

13. Read One Recipe per Ten-Minute Gap

Micro-learning only fits a gap if the unit is smaller than the gap, so make one recipe rather than one cookbook the unit.

14. Make Three Flashcards and No More

Cap the academic version at three cards per gap: one question on the front, one short answer on the back, nothing copied wholesale from a page.

15. Reset One Place for Ten Minutes a Day

Pick one small place per day and set a ten-minute timer: the junk drawer, the entry mat, your photo library, a bathroom shelf, the top of your desk, one bag, or the kitchen table.

Move, Call, Build, and Include Everyone

16. Walk a Loop You Know by Heart

Measure one loop of eight to twelve minutes from your front door and one from your workplace, then stop deciding where to walk, since deciding is what eats the gap.

17. Stretch for Five Minutes Where You Stand

Keep one card for gaps where you cannot leave the room: two minutes of ankle pumps and calf raises, thirty to forty-five seconds each side on a standing hip flexor stretch with a wall for balance, slow shoulder rolls, and a neck side bend with easy breathing.

18. Call One Person Every Week

Write twelve names on one card, one per week, and rotate them deliberately: a parent, an old colleague, a friend you drifted from, someone who lives far away.

19. Keep a Monthly Project List Ready to Start

Once a month, list three projects that interest you and, for each one, write the ten-minute opening move and where the materials live.

20. Hand Kids a Boredom Kit, Not a Screen

Build the menu with children rather than for them, because three jars labeled three, ten, and thirty minutes and filled with pictures they draw themselves work surprisingly well from about age four, and a rotated card deck beats a tablet in a restaurant since choosing is the entertainment.

Sources

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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/Build-a-List-of-Boredom-Busters. Corrections: https://www.howcompass.com/c