THE LONG STRETCH

A Winter Break Kit for Little Kids

17 days off. 3 ideas a week. No colour-coded schedule.

What's inside

- The parent guide: a menu and a rhythm, not a timetable (page 2)
- The Menu: 24 ideas in 6 groups - circle 3 a week (pages 3-4)
- The Chart: 12 days, one colouring twist a day (page 5)
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Free from Coryverse - stories for all ages, especially young children.

The Quiet Table runs on the free Coryverse Christmas colouring pack (thecoryverse.com/free-christmas-coloring-pages) or any colouring book you already own. No new art needed.

The Parent Guide

Winter break feels long because it is long. School ends on Friday, December 18, and in a lot of districts your child is home for seventeen or eighteen days - with no routine, short days, and one giant holiday sitting right in the middle. Day one feels like freedom. By day six, everyone is climbing the walls.

This kit is not a schedule. Schedules you fall behind on just become one more thing to feel bad about. This kit is three things:

1. A MENU, not a timetable. On the first morning of break, read the menu out loud and let each child circle three things for the week. A thing they picked gets a lot less eye-rolling than a thing you assigned.

2. A RHYTHM, not a timetable. Morning: something active. Midday: one thing from the menu. Afternoon: nothing planned - boredom is not an emergency, it is the pause before a kid invents something. Evening: one small family ritual - a game, a story, a walk to look at lights.

3. A CHART your child can see. It hangs where they eat breakfast, they check the boxes, and the reminder lives on their side of the table - not in your head.

Pick three a week. Skip days freely. The reward at the end is a choice, not a toy: they pick the movie, they pick Saturday's breakfast, or they stay up thirty minutes late on the last night of break. Ten checkmarks earn it. Twelve is a bonus, not a requirement.

Movement note: school recess usually covers some of the day's movement. Over break, it is on us - children 6-17 need 60+ minutes of active play a day, and preschoolers do best active throughout the day (CDC, via the winter-break research this kit is built on).

The Menu - Pick 3 a Week

Read it out loud on the first morning. Each child circles three for the week.

BUILD IT (materials out, runs itself)

1. Cardboard City - save December's delivery boxes; tape + markers; build one building a day, connect them Friday. Setup 5 min.

2. The Forever Puzzle - one big puzzle on a side table all break; anyone adds pieces any time; finish it in the re-entry days. Setup 2 min.

3. Blanket Fort That Stays Up - build it once, it lives all week; stories and the movie pick happen inside it. Setup 10 min.

4. Write-and-Perform a Play - costumes from the dress-up bin, hand-drawn tickets, performance for whoever is visiting. Setup 0 min (kids run it).

MOVE IT (school recess is gone - the movement is on us)

5. Morning Lights Walk - hot drink in a travel cup, flashlights, vote on the best house. 20 min.

6. Indoor Obstacle Course - couch cushions, a hallway crawl, a tape balance line on the floor, timed runs. Setup 5 min.

7. Freeze Dance Party - each kid picks 3 songs; music stops, everybody freezes. 0 min.

8. Backyard / Park Scavenger Hunt - a pinecone, something red, animal tracks, a bare-tree nest, a frozen-or-not puddle. Florida version: a palm frond, a lizard, a shell or smooth stone. Setup 2 min (list on the chart).

QUIET TABLE (20-30 min, after lunch - the colouring-challenge slot)

9. Colouring With a Twist - one page a day from the free Coryverse Christmas colouring pack or any colouring book you own, WITH the day's twist from the chart. Checkmark is the game.

10. Thank-You Note Station - paper, stickers, envelopes out from Dec 26; little kids draw, big kids write; one card a day = every note mailed before school.

11. Family Portrait Row - one snowman/family page per person, coloured in that person's real hat-and-scarf colours, taped in a row on the fridge.

12. The Goals Page (Jan 1) - colour a plain winter scene; write or dictate one thing to try in 2027 along the bottom; date it, file it with this chart for next December.

The Menu (continued)

STORY TIME (the book house leg)

13. Library Day - one trip in Week 1, one in the quiet middle; a fresh stack costs nothing and resets the whole menu.

14. Grandparent Story Call - a scheduled video call where a grandparent reads a bedtime story, or is interviewed: first job, first car, favourite toy, worst haircut (10 questions, kids hold the list).

15. Cousins' Read-Aloud - one short book everyone piles in for; older kids hold the book or read a page, younger ones turn pages.

16. Book Advent Leftovers - any wrapped books not opened Dec 1-24 become quiet-middle nightly stories.

HELP & THANK

17. Recipe Handoff - a grandparent or parent teaches one family dish; the child writes/draws it into a family cookbook page.

18. Toy Swap Box - each child fills one box of outgrown toys to give away before the new ones land; sort together Dec 26-27.

19. Neighbour Cards - make cards for one neighbour / senior centre / mail carrier; deliver on a lights walk.

20. Kitchen Science - colour-mixing ice cubes, baking-soda volcano, salt crystals on a string. Adult at the table for this one only.

BOREDOM JAR / DO NOTHING (protected, not a failure)

21. The Boredom Jar - in Week 1 kids write/draw THEIR OWN idea slips; when 'I'm bored' arrives, they draw one. Their ideas, not yours.

22. Materials Left Out - tape, paper, cardboard and a box of odds and ends on a low table, no instructions. Half-finished counts.

23. Ten Quiet Minutes - when 'I'm bored' lands, the house answer is: 'Great. What are you going to do about it?' - then ten minutes before any rescue.

24. Nothing Afternoon - a planned empty afternoon. Pajamas allowed. This one goes ON the chart so nobody has to earn it.

The Chart - 12 Days

Hang it where your child eats breakfast. They check the boxes - the reminder lives on their side of the table. Start Day 1 on your first weekday off. If your break starts Dec 19, Days 19-20 are the weekend opener: read the menu, circle picks, fill the Boredom Jar, start the Forever Puzzle. Reward at 10 checkmarks. Every day runs the same rhythm: Move / One Thing / Nothing / Story - plus the day's Quiet-Table twist:

- ☐ Day 1 - Mon Dec 21 (Solstice, shortest day) - Twist: Colour your page in under 15 minutes, timer on the table.
- ☐ Day 2 - Tue Dec 22 - Twist: No white allowed; snow is blue, grey or purple, the way real shadow on snow looks. Florida swap: shade a beach/winter scene in only three colours.
- ☐ Day 3 - Wed Dec 23 - Twist: Look up where emperor penguins live (Antarctica, not the North Pole) and write/dictate it at the bottom.
- ☐ Day 4 - Thu Dec 24 (protect this one) - Twist: The easiest quiet page in the folder, late afternoon, while dinner is late and bedtime is a negotiation.
- ☐ Day 5 - Fri Dec 25 - Twist: NO twist, easiest page, about 4 p.m. New toys win the morning.
- ☐ Day 6 - Sat Dec 26 - Twist: Thank-you station opens - colour a small page, cut it out, glue it to a folded card for one gift. One a day from today.
- ☐ Day 7 - Sun Dec 27 - Twist: Pick-your-own page; twist = draw a background behind the main figure.
- ☐ Day 8 - Mon Dec 28 - Twist: Family Portrait Row (menu #11).
- ☐ Day 9 - Tue Dec 29 - Twist: Stand-up parade - colour, cut out, tape a folded card strip to the back, line them on the windowsill (cardstock for this one).
- ☐ Day 10 - Wed Dec 30 - Twist: The hardest page in the folder, 30-minute limit, permission to leave it unfinished.
- ☐ Day 11 - Thu Dec 31 - Twist: Countdown colouring - one small page per hour from dinner to bedtime (which, under 8, is well before midnight).
- ☐ Day 12 - Fri Jan 1 - Twist: The Goals Page (menu #12). Clip all 12 pages into a booklet, chart as cover, file with the holiday decorations.

The Re-Entry Strip

Printed on the back of the chart - Jan 2 to the night before school:

- Jan 2: Finish the Forever Puzzle. Pack the backpack TODAY, not Sunday night.

- Jan 2 to the day before school (Jan 2-4 St. Johns / Jan 2-5 Duval): wake at the school wake time every morning - wake time moves first. Bedtime slides 15 minutes earlier each night until it lands on the school bedtime. Same story, same order, every night.

- Last evening: chart comes down, booklet filed, reward choice is spent. (The stay-up-30 reward is spent on Jan 1, the last night of break - before the slide finishes.)

The rules, printed on the chart

Sibling rule: same themes, two difficulty levels (little ones skip the written parts), identical reward, older helps younger on cut-out days 6, 8 and 9.

Miss-a-day rule: skip it. Ten checkmarks earn the reward. Twelve is a bonus, not a requirement.

Boredom rule: boredom is not an emergency. It is the pause before a kid invents something. Ten quiet minutes before any rescue.

Thank-You Card Template

From Dec 26: one card a day = every note mailed before school starts. Little kids draw, big kids write. Colour a small picture, cut it out, glue it to a folded card - or copy this page onto cardstock and fold on the dashed line.

THANK YOU!

Dear _____,

Thank you for _____.

My favourite part was _____.

Love, _____

Grown-up job: address the envelope together, stamp it, and walk it to the mailbox on a lights walk (menu #19).

The Goals Page - Jan 1

Colour a plain winter scene in the box - any page you love works taped over it - then write or dictate one thing to try in 2027 along the lines. Date it, clip it with the chart, and file both with the holiday decorations for next December.

(your coloured winter scene goes here)

In 2027, I want to try:

_____

_____

_____

Name: _____ Date: January 1, 2027

The Long Stretch - free from Coryverse, thecoryverse.com/winter-break. Quiet Table supply: the free Christmas colouring pack at thecoryverse.com/free-christmas-coloring-pages.