

PLUGGED IN
MOVIE AWARDS

BEST FAMILY FILMS

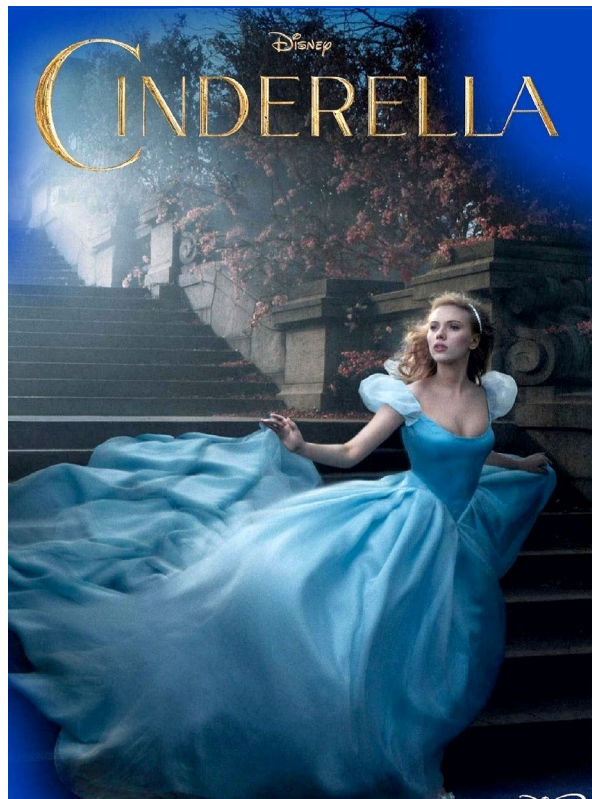
20 FUN FAMILY-FRIENDLY FILMS

Summer is a great time to pop some popcorn, sit down as a family and enjoy a good movie together. Focus on the Family's Plugged In team has compiled a list of films nominated for its annual "Best Movies for Kids" list from the last several years.



INSIDE OUT

(PG) Ever since *Toy Story* first charmed audiences more than 20 years ago, Disney's Pixar has been known not just for its digital artistry, but for its rich, complex storytelling. But even for Pixar, *Inside Out* is a masterpiece. It gives us Riley, an 11-year-old girl recently uprooted from her Minnesota home, and it takes us *inside* the sometimes quarrelsome emotions roiling in her brain. It dares suggest that, while being happy is great, sadness has its place, too. *Inside Out* plumbs the depths of the human mind and forces us to care about an imaginary creature that cries candy. We might've cried a little during the movie, too—but that doesn't stop *Inside Out* from being a movie filled with, quite literally, Joy. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



CINDERELLA

(PG) Tampering with nostalgia is dicey business. (Just ask George Lucas.) But with *Cinderella*, Disney has worked its old-fashioned magic in ways that would make Uncle Walt smile. This reboot reimagines his cherished animated classic as a live-action fairy tale, imbuing it with thematic additions that arguably make it a *better* story than the original. That's because the new version focuses as much on inner character as outward beauty. One example: Cinderella's dying mother tells her daughter "a great secret that will see you through all the trials life has to offer: Have courage and be kind." [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



THE GOOD DINOSAUR

(PG) This prehistoric Pixar pic starts with a series of big *What ifs*. What if the massive meteor that scientists say hit the Earth and killed off the dinosaurs . . . missed? And what if, millions of years later, dinosaurs evolved into a talking, farming and family-raising species? Then, what if a fearful runt of a dinosaur named Arlo were to be accidentally separated from his family? He may have to take up with a pet human boy named Spot. And together they might set off on a voyage of self-discovery—all in hopes of finding a way back home. Those willing to step into this animated alternate reality will find a bit of toilet humor and several scenes of peril, as well as fun lessons on the importance of facing your fears and the value of family and friends. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



THE PEANUTS MOVIE

(G) Good ol' Charlie Brown—the lovable kid next door in a zigzag shirt—once again struggles with feelings of inadequacy. When a new kid moves into town, Charlie thinks he might just make a new friend—one who doesn't know of his emotional baggage. But good grief! Wouldn't you know it, the new neighbor is a cute Little Red-Haired Girl who sends Charlie into a heart-thumping tizzy. He'll have to come up with something that he's good at if he ever hopes to have her glance his way! This latest gathering of the *Peanuts* gang has been updated with 3-D images and new voices. But it's still pretty much the perfect representation of a half-century of Charles Schulz comic strips—condensed into a single, feel-good flick. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE

(PG) Life is pretty good at Mossy Bottom Farm, but the workaday schedule gets a tad tedious. So a little sheep named Shaun puts his noggin to the task of getting himself and his woolly pals a day off. As silly ewe plans often do, this one goes awry—leaving the Farmer wandering around in the city without his memory and a bunch of sheep wondering how to set things right. Based on a kids' TV series, this Claymation pic is packed with crazy circumstances and nutty nonsense. And, in a way, the woolly yarn is something of a silent movie since there's not a discernable word to be heard. The only drawback is that some of this flick's nonverbal antics rely on potty humor for a punchline. But it's all pretty sheeepy—er, peachy, other than that. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



THE LEGO MOVIE

(PG) Blocky plastic guy Emmet is an average LEGO nobody. In fact, he's probably the most average inter-connecting doodad dude you'd ever meet. One day Emmet encounters an incredibly *un*-average girl named Wyldestyle who, for some reason, mistakes him for someone she calls "The Special." When she introduces Emmet to this wizard-like guy, *he* thinks Emmet is the long-awaited Special, too. Now, Emmet realizes that all these stories can't really be about him. For the first time in his very square life there are people who think he might be more than mediocre. And if they want him to be special, then he'll do whatever his very average brain can come up with to make that true. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



BIG HERO 6

(PG) Hiro Hamada is smart. He's 14 and already a high school grad. But Hiro isn't living up to his full potential. After his big brother Tadashi was killed in an accident, Hiro wallows in his grief. But his brother's invention—a balloon-like, health care robot called Baymax—eventually pulls Hiro back. What's more, Baymax helps prove that Tadashi's death wasn't so much an accident as the result of a nefarious plot. And *that* spurs the megabrain kid to action. He starts by giving Baymax crime-fighting upgrades, then gets some of Tadashi's science whiz-kid friends for heroic backup. Before you can say "bim-bam-kapow," a new superhero team is born. One may think this is primarily a Disney-ish tale about an action-crazed kid and his balloon robot pal, but there's more to it than that. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



MUPPETS MOST WANTED

(PG) The Muppets are at loose ends until a businessman named Dominic Badguy suggests to Kermit that he take his friends on a world tour. Perfect! They take their act on the road, delivering their Muppet Magic to John and Jane Q. Public around the globe. Little do the fleecy (and fleecible) friends know that Dominic is a notorious villain. He's a sidekick to an even notoriouser frog villain named Constantine—a dastardly mastermind who looks *just like* Kermit. Constantine replaces Kermit as our favorite green guy is snatched and sent to Siberia. Then thefts occur wherever the Muppets go. Can Miss Piggy realize that the, uh, wool has been pulled over their eyes? It's so fun that you won't care that this plot is just a vehicle for knee-slapping guffaws, hilarious musical romps and well-timed setups. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: SECRET OF THE TOMB

(PG) Larry Daley has risen from being a frowned-upon night guard at the famous New York American Museum of Natural History to almost being in charge of the place. And it's all thanks to the magical Tablet of Akmenrah—a long-ago unearthed artifact that can somehow bring statues, figurines and T.rex bones to life every night. Something, however, is majorly amiss. Again! That supernatural tablet is beginning to corrode for some reason, and those animated objects are losing their zip. So it's off to the British Museum of Natural History, home of Akmenrah's mummified parents, to find some answers. This third installment is a Teddy-Roosevelt-meets-Sir-Lancelot-meets-Attila-the-Hun clash of "history" in a cartwheeling splash of silliness. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



DOLPHIN TALE 2

(PG) One heartwarming story about dolphin survival deserves another, it seems, which is exactly what we get in this sequel. In 2011, moviegoers were introduced to Winter, a dolphin whose tail had to be amputated. Winter got a snazzy new prosthetic one and learned how to use it. *Dolphin Tale 2* picks up with Winter's true-life story after the animal's longtime tankmate dies. Dolphin depression sets in, and the crew at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium tries to introduce Winter to a newly rescued marine mammal named Hope. But Hope's not crazy about Winter's artificial tail. It's a dramatic and very wet conflict that propels *Dolphin Tale 2* to its ultimately hope-filled conclusion—one that offers a few other important lessons about growing up. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



FROZEN

(PG) Let's face it: Disney has the princess market cornered. From *Snow White* to Tiana (from *The Princess and the Frog*), the Mouse House has made a fortune on them, so it's little wonder that this return-to-glory Disney flick features two—and they're just as pretty and charismatic as we've come to expect. But even though there are music and balls and curses and kisses, Elsa and Anna tell an altogether different story than Disney's told in the past. Here, true love is found not just by suitors, but sisters, and sacrifice holds the key to saving grace. *Frozen* isn't perfect: Some kids may find it scary in the slick spots. But it has the power to melt the hearts of the iciest of critics. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



DESPICABLE ME 2

(PG) Once-nasty Gru has a hard time transitioning from supervillain to loving dad. Raising three girls is harder than coming up with evil plots to rule the world. Then there's the question of a job: He's never had one that didn't involve a death ray. When the Anti-Villain League offers him work, Gru gets the hang of changing careers. A female agent named Lucy Wilde helps. She's a bit obnoxious and overbearing, but when she starts zapping people with her lipstick Taser, Gru goes all weak in the knees. This rollicking pic about adopted daughters, a reformed-baddie dad and a bunch of slapstick silliness stirs a little bit of toilet humor and Three Stooges-style roughhousing into its crime-solving mix. Yet it's a frenetically enjoyable yarn about heroic choices and the life-changing impact of love and family. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



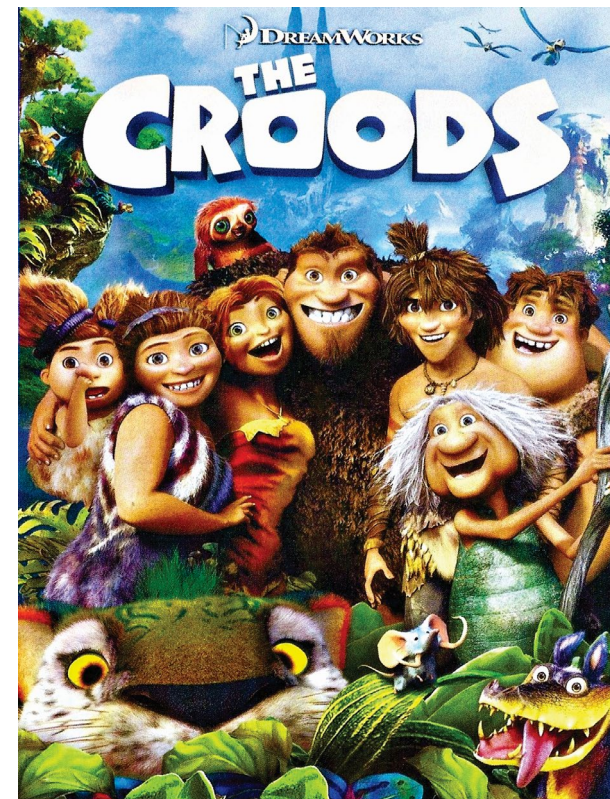
EPIC

(PG) Mary Katherine (who prefers M.K.) returns home to spend summer with her dad for the first time since her parents separated years ago. She isn't hoping for much, though. Quite frankly, the guy's a little nutty—obsessed with the idea that a kingdom of small people live in the forest nearby. But when she accidentally spots a tiny person and shrinks to the size of an ant, Dad doesn't seem so crazy after all. Based loosely on William Joyce's book *The Leaf Men and the Brave Good Bugs*, this is a good-vs.-evil fairy tale that clothes itself in environmental concerns. It's a cute story about tiny warriors who battle to keep a forest green while pushing back the forces of mold and decay. Light lessons of family and reconciliation are endearing and colorful. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



ESCAPE FROM PLANET EARTH

(PG) Planet Baab's famous muscle-bound hero, Scorch, undertakes a rescue mission to that dark, deadly place called . . . Earth. Things go wrong in a hurry. Before you can say "E.T. phone home," Scorch is captured and on his way to Area 51 in the evil clutches of the vengeful General Shanker. It's up to Scorch's nerdy and oh-so-not-muscle-bound brother, Gary, to come to the rescue. The two blue bros don't often see eye to eye, but somebody's gotta do the brave thing when the glugorps are down. This animated sci-fi spoof is goofy and packed with meaningful messages about familial love, friendship and feisty fearlessness. There's not a lot to wave a blue flag of warning over other than a bit of toilet humor and some—dun-dun-dun—SCARY HUMANS! [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



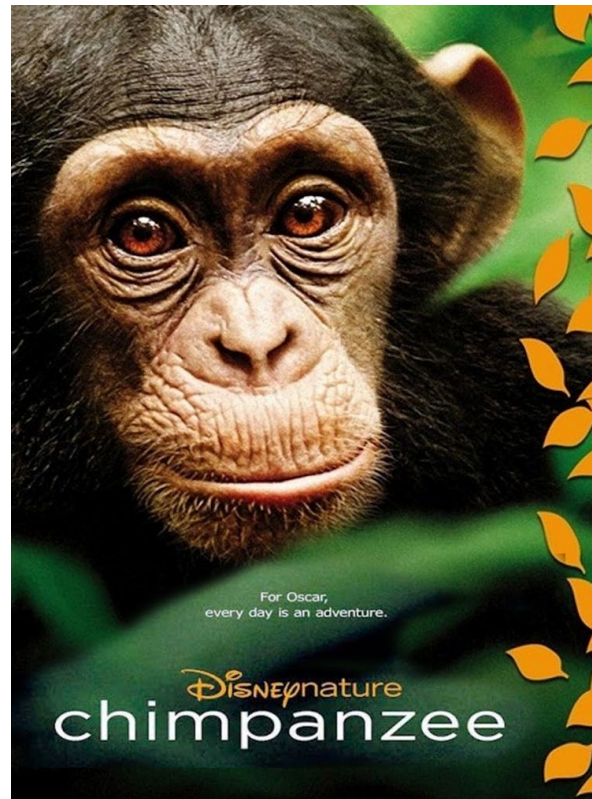
THE CROODS

(PG) There are those who might've stayed away from this DreamWorks movie because of the name alone. But it's not like that at all. Not really. Sure, the Crood family may be a bit rough. But bathroom humor is surprisingly minimal and the story here is just short of magical. Eep is the film's focal point—a cave teen who longs to get out on her own while her stick-in-the-mud dad, Grug, tries to bottle her up inside the family cave. Guy is the film's handsome, adventurous leading man who has eyes for Eep. But it turns out that this is really Grug's story—a tale about a father trying to do the very best he can for his family in a world that's rapidly changing. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



BRAVE

(PG) Growing up is never easy. Doubly so for princesses who have a persistent habit of conflict with their mothers. In *Brave*, a sassy Scottish princess, named Merida, is more interested in horseback riding and archery than in her mother's ideas about becoming a lady. So tense is their relationship that Merida wishes she didn't have to deal with her nagging mom *at all* . . . a wish granted by a "helpful" witch, though not the way Merida expects. She learns how self-absorbed she's been and how much her mother loves her. It's a tender story, but families should know that Merida and her mom traverse some dark (and sometimes spiritually dim) moments together. Toilet humor creeps in, too—not enough, however, to completely derail this redemptive tale. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



CHIMPANZEE

(G) It's a jungle out there, quite literally for poor Oscar. Only the strong survive, and an orphaned chimp like Oscar—barring a miracle—doesn't stand much of a chance. But in this nature film from Disney, that miracle happens. Freddy, a powerful alpha chimpanzee who's never shown a whit of interest in Oscar (or any other baby chimp) before, takes the tyke under his wing and shows him how to survive: how to eat, how to groom, how to stay safe. It's the year's most improbable love story, and perhaps its most touching. Through the eyes of Oscar and Freddy kids of all ages can learn about the value of charity, compassion and, most especially, family. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



ICE AGE: CONTINENTAL DRIFT

(PG) Manny the mammoth, Diego the saber-toothed tiger and Sid the sloth are set afloat on an iceberg and must battle a pirate ape to get back home. This fourth animated Ice Age has a bit of lowball regurgitating humor and just a dash of floating-on-a-slab-of-ice peril, but nothing too odorous or scary for your average young sloth. On the other hand, the longing and love for family and the growing pains between teens and adults are positive topics well explored amidst the joking, seafaring and swashbuckling. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)



JOURNEY 2: THE MYSTERIOUS ISLAND

(PG) Inspired by the classic novels of H.G. Wells and Edgar Rice Burroughs, this live-action adventure from Walden Media thrilled moviegoing kids with 3-D. There's nothing like a perilous quest to unite sparring family members. This one bonds a teenager, his grandfather and his stepdad as our heroes outrun giant lizards and insects on a lush island that's as dangerous as it is beautiful. Impressive effects. Wild and crazy action scenes. Better yet, the story packs great messages about absentee dads and the selfless love required to grow a healthy family. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)

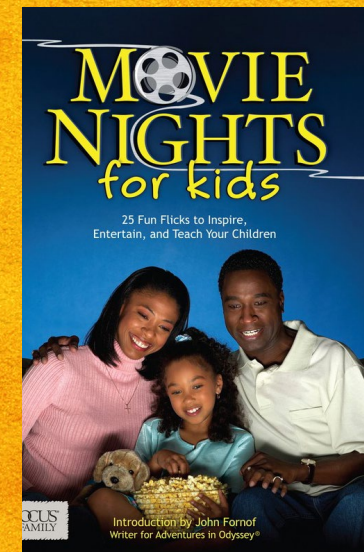


MADAGASCAR 3: EUROPE'S MOST WANTED

(PG) The homesick menagerie of zoo animals are finally heading back to their Central Park home—via Monte Carlo, Rome and London. Things start off on the French Riviera where Alex the Lion and his furry pals get chased out of town by a psychotic animal-control chief named Capitaine DuBois. She wants a few more stuffed trophies for her wall. So, of course, there's only one thing for the animal pals to do . . . join the circus. This animated migration tale has a few off-color giggles and some cartoony thumping under its big top. But it's a warmhearted, fun romp that encourages kids to overcome their fears and make the most of the unexpected things in life. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REVIEW.](#)

Movie messages

For ideas that make for a great family movie night, check out the book *Movie Nights for Kids*.



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