



Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

School Is Out. Yay!!! Now What?

by Becky L. Spivey, M.Ed.

Before the final school bell rings, parents should be on the lookout for summertime activities in the community and in other towns or cities close by that are fun and age-appropriate for your children. Searching online is your best bet for finding places to go, things to see and do, and the costs.

No one wants a regimented routine, but in order for children to avoid the “summer slide,” it is better to have some sort of routine rather than a day-to-day, free-for-all of watching TV, playing video games, and chatting online or texting. A routine helps make the day productive. If parents work outside the home and the child is in someone else’s care, hopefully, he or she is participating in activities other than occupying a front row seat watching TV. Caregivers and daycare facilities usually plan many outings for their summer clients, because they know that children get bored quickly and need different activities to keep them engaged!

Here are some suggestions for summertime activities to keep your child involved in learning at home and in the community.

Visit the local zoo

Take sketch pads and pencils, pack sandwiches, tour the zoo, then have children draw and write about their favorite animals. Have older children research favorite animals online and find out more about their species, habitat,



food, life cycle, and life span. Some zoos have classes over the summer to teach children about what goes on at the zoo after hours, how the animals are cared for, and the special needs of each animal. Great for language, vocabulary, writing, and reading.

Volunteer

There are countless agencies in need of volunteers all year round. Most encourage children to volunteer in hopes of inspiring them to continue helping their fellow man as they get older. Parents/adults must accompany children. Food pantries need help stocking shelves. Clothing banks need help sorting clothes. City organizations need help tidying up the park, planting flowers, picking up trash, etc. Volunteering helps children feel needed and gives them a sense of accomplishment when they can look back and see what they’ve done. Great for fostering social skills and cooperation.



Visit local museums or art galleries

Local galleries usually feature the works of local artists. Some also have workshops where artists come and talk about their work, their inspirations, and techniques. Some galleries have artists conduct classes. If there are workshops or classes in your area, have your child make up a list of questions to ask. Research the artists to see their other works that may be in a different medium. Art develops fine motor skills.



Start cooking

Have children help with age-appropriate tasks in the kitchen. Bake a cake for a party, cook a meal for an elderly person, prepare treats for family game night, or help with dinner for the family. Under your supervision, have children read the recipes, gather ingredients, pots, pans, and utensils. Help children use their math skills to figure out how to double a recipe, half a recipe, etc. Math is easier to figure out with visual examples. Stirring, mixing, and moving pots and pans to the stove and in and out of the oven also work on fine and gross motor skills (for older children under supervision). Sit down with your children and have them help plan a menu of meals for the week. Let your children help make the



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grocery list for the meals and go shopping with you in the store – if you're up for the challenge. Great for critical thinking and planning.

Take swimming lessons

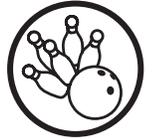
Check with your local YMCA, sports clubs (of which you may already be a member), or with adults that are good swimmers and ask about giving your child lessons. Some neighborhoods have swim teams of all ages and abilities. This usually requires a big commitment on the parents' part to have the child present at all practices and swim meets. Great for strength, agility, gross motor skills, and spatial awareness.



share during the movie. During the movie, parents can jot down questions on note cards about the movie to use in a game afterward. Divide the children into teams. Children take turn answering the question and receive a point for each correct answer. The team with the most points gets to choose the next movie for the gathering (or another prize). Use the 5 WH- questions: who, when, where, what, and why. Great for language development and sequencing.

Bowling

Find a local bowling alley that offers special slots of time for children to bowl. Some alleys use bumper pads to help children keep the ball in the lane. This can be a physically challenging game and is a great exercise for spatial awareness and gross motor skills.



Visit your local state parks

Take a drive to your state parks. Pack a picnic, horseshoes, Frisbees, bats and balls, hiking gear, and take advantage of beautiful scenery. Here's a great opportunity for children to take or draw pictures, later make a scrapbook, and write a caption for each of the photos. Have older children write about their visit to the park. Try to visit with the park ranger. Talk with him or her about his or her responsibilities in the park. Research the park itself online. Find out when it became a park and the special features protected there. Have children write about what they saw or did throughout the day. Great for language, vocabulary, art (fine motor), gross motor, physical fitness.



Scavenger hunt

Create a scavenger list specifically for your children or invite friends with families to participate. When writing the clues, keep in mind that the game is for the children, and don't make clues too difficult or abstract. Older children can come up with clues and a list of objects for their parents to find for even more fun! Great for writing, social skills, and cooperation.



Have a community field day

Pick a day and plan "Field Day" for the neighborhood. Have families sign up as teams or group everyone in age categories – children and adults. Recreate school field day games or make up your own. Children have as much fun watching adults play these games than participating themselves. Young children can partner with their parents. Have the older children organize the games and the teams. Game participants can go in order of youngest to oldest and vice versa. Great for physical strength, agility, and gross motor development.



Turn on the sprinkler!

This one is the most fun when parents join in, but you can stay dry and watch the fun. Water balloons, spray bottles, wading pool, and water guns all add to the fun. Lather on the sunscreen! A great physical activity, but check your city or town ordinances for any drought restrictions.



Get on your bike and ride!

If there aren't enough bikes for everyone in the family, borrow some! Take the children on a bike ride through the park or your neighborhood. Helmets are a must. Review the rules for biking on the street with the children. This is great exercise as well as helps develop gross motor skills, strength, and agility.



Have movie night in the backyard

Hang a white sheet on a large wall outside. Borrow a projector or go in with the neighbors and rent one (Yes, you can rent projectors!). Choose an age-appropriate movie and invite the neighbors. Everyone invited can bring sodas, popcorn, and other snacks to



Have a great summer!

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