



Homeschool Summer **SURVIVAL COURSE**

Table of **CONTENTS**

01 SUMMER LEARNING'S EFFECT

Discover the power of summer learning and how it can change your children's lives!

02 WHAT IS SUMMER SLIDE?

Learn more about summer slide, the stats, and how it affects learning.

03 THIS SUMMER, FALL IN LOVE WITH LEARNING!

Learn how to make summer learning so much fun your kiddos love it!

04 CREATIVE WAYS TO ORGANIZE

Learn how to incorporate passive learning into your summer!

05 CREATE LEARNING GOALS THAT IGNITE IMAGINATION

Learn more about goal setting, learning preferences, inspiring resources, and creating a fun schedule!

06 OBSTACLES TO SUMMER LEARNING



Table of **CONTENTS**

07 101 THINGS TO DO THIS SUMMER

Learn how much fun summer and learning can be together!

08 SUMMER LEARNING TIPS

How to balance work, family and summer learning.

09 KIDS CHANGING THE WORLD

Summer activities for young activists with ideas, and resources for older children.

10 SUMMER CAMP POSSIBILITIES

Choosing a camp experience, preparing for camp, and how to pay for it.





PRAISE FOR THE HOMESCHOOL SURVIVAL COURSE...

John Edelson - Founder of Time4Learning.com

This book applies the parenting and educational skills and instincts honed as a homeschooling parent to the challenge of long summer vacations. You can learn to break away from the painful trade-off between what the kids want and what they need to do! They're sure to let you know how much fun they've had!

Julie Jenkins - author of *Enlightened Discipline*

This book focuses on keeping learning exciting and relevant to the kids while making sure learning and discovery are inspired and encouraged. Well done!

Pat Wyman - founder of Howtolearn.com

Want your child to thrive during the summer? Then this book is your definitive go-to guide and one you'll want to recommend to all your relatives and friends, too! You will especially love the tips on making car trips peaceful, and the activities that are more fun than video games!

Lee Binz - author of *Getting the Most Out of Your Homeschool This Summer*

What a fun book! The Summertime Survival Guide is wonderfully fun and a great resource for families with children of all ages. The list of '101 Things To Do This Summer' is worth its weight in gold!

This is a recommended resource!

TO THE COURSE

WELCOME TO THE COURSE

WELCOME TO THE COURSE

WELCOME TO THE COURSE

Welcome TO THE COURSE

Welcome to the course that just might change your summer!
We've brought together a wealth of information and given you
planning space to create your very own unique summer learning
opportunities to avoid that dreaded summer slump!

WELCOME TO THE COURSE

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WELCOME TO THE COURSE

In this course, we will walk you
through all the why's, what's, and
how's to help you plan and create a
summer filled with wonder, discovery,
and fun!

We've included worksheets and
interactive pages that will help you
along the way!

By following this plan, you'll gain back
the summer without losing any
learning milestones all while nurturing
kids that are ready to learn in the fall!

TO THE COURSE

WELCOME TO THE COURSE

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**TELL ME AND I
FORGET, *teach*
ME AND I MAY
REMEMBER,
INVOLVE ME AND
I *learn* .”**



CHAPTER 1

SUMMER LEARNING'S LASTING EFFECT

Personal
story

Shared by Rebecca Kochenderfer

From the beginning, engaging my daughters and son in imaginative play and sparking their curiosity with hands-on activities and fieldtrips brought my family tremendous joy. As my children embraced new learning opportunities, I stood in awe watching their worlds expand.

Summer learning also had great significance in my own early years. Childhood was not easy for me. My family was poor and while my parents did their best, education was not a priority. It couldn't be; keeping a roof over our heads and putting food on the table was always their main concern.

Summertime provided respite from these challenging circumstances. At the end of each school year, my bags were packed and I spent the weekends with my dear Aunt Mary. The wide Victorian staircase that led to her apartment is still in my memory.

One otherwise ordinary afternoon, I remember my aunt asking me to read aloud to her. As I stuttered and stumbled over each word, the gaps in my education surfaced. Although it was an excruciating experience for us both, it also proved to be life-altering.



Immediately, my determined aunt made it her mission to teach me how to read. Not once did she shame me or make me feel bad about my difficulties. Rather, Aunt Mary lovingly put me in her lap and we read together—for hours. We devoured piles of children's books purchased from the neighborhood thrift stores and my love of reading was born.

Aunt Mary also taught me to play the piano and she gave me Lincoln Logs that I used to create whole worlds, each filled with dramatic storylines and characters. Baking angel food cakes in her tiny apartment's kitchen is among my favorite memories still.

My Aunt Mary was a skilled teacher. Intuitively, she infused our days with opportunities for learning, each one bundled up in love and care. There were neither drills nor stern announcements proclaiming it was time for lessons. Instead, she instilled a love of learning in me by modeling her own curiosity and love of books.

I was eight when my parents died and a different aunt and uncle took me into their home where I remained for the rest of my childhood. In the summer months, Aunt Dorothy signed me up for the swim team and sewing lessons. Uncle Ed had Mondays off and he would take me on factory tours throughout our town. We visited the almond factory and the Wonder Bread factory and afterwards we always stopped by Wienerschnitzel for French fries. These Mondays with "Unk" were some of the happiest days of my life.

By high school, I'd become fond of preparing for summer by writing lists of all of the activities I wanted to explore and of the books that I would read. Summer provided the freedom to learn whatever I wanted. I took full advantage of this time each year.

My love of learning followed me to college where I earned a Master's degree in education. After graduation, I became a private teacher for Barry Goldwater III. I enjoyed a fantastic spring with his family sailing through the Caribbean aboard their yacht. I believe his family hired me because I recognized the unique learning opportunities that were possible in the midst of these extraordinary travels.

Biology class consisted of studies about the fish we were seeing firsthand. History centered on the stories of the islands that we explored together. Each of the books we read somehow related to the sights we were visiting. I suppose I wanted to provide young Barry with the same gifts my aunt and uncle had given me. I wanted to make his learning fun, exciting, and relevant.

Years later, when it came time to send my children to school, I decided to teach them at home instead. Our days spent homeschooling were full of field trips, science kits, art, and a good amount of travel. Our house was a mess, but we sure had fun!

Throughout the year, my family enjoyed our time learning together but summer was something extra special. Any pressure we might have felt to complete material and achieve particular goals during the school year evaporated in June. Summer learning isn't about specific academic expectations. Rather, it is no-pressure learning and it is during this special season that great things can happen.

YOUR THOUGHTS:



CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS SUMMER SLIDE?

Learn &
Grow

Parents often ask, “How can I help my kids avoid forgetting the skills they’ve practiced all year long? How do I prevent summer slide?” This entire book is, in part, a response to this concern because the summer slide is real.

The National Association of Summer Learning highlights the potential outcomes of summer learning loss. All young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. Research spanning 100 years shows that students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer. (White, 1906; Heyns, 1978; Entwisle and Alexander 1992; Cooper, 1996; Downey et al, 2004)

Most students lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months. Low-income students also lose more than two months in reading achievement, despite the fact that their middle-class peers make slight gains. (Cooper, 1996) Furthermore, parents consistently cite summer as the most difficult time to ensure that their children have productive things to do. (Duffett et al, 2004)

What you will learn

Summer learning is a real concern but something that can easily be remedied!

**ABOUT 2 MONTHS OF
READING SKILLS AND 2
MONTHS OF MATH
SKILLS ARE LOST OVER
A SINGLE *summer*.**

IS SUMMER SLIDE REALLY A THING?

I appreciate the concerns of the parents I talk with and I remember the efforts I made to keep my own children engaged during the summer months. However, you don't have to arm yourself with worksheets and flashcards. If you want to learn how to avoid summer slide and still have a restful and fun summer, read on.

Professionals have long considered the value of engaging children in meaningful learning throughout the summer months. Teachers across the country complain that summer learning loss results in their spending the first two months of school reviewing old material.

According to the National Association of Summer Learning, "In a 2012 survey of 500 teachers in summer learning programs in 15 cities, 66% said it typically takes them at least 3-4 weeks to re-teach the previous year's skills at the beginning of a new school year. Another 24% said re-teaching takes them 5-6 weeks."

Much of the published research indicates that learning loss is a measurable reality among a widespread group of students. Sadly, this is particularly evident among those children living in environments where learning opportunities and exposure to stimulating activities and ideas are minimal.

As homeschool families, we can easily encourage those necessary activities and provide plenty of learning opportunities throughout the summer that will engage and encourage our children to stay sharp without the need for "formal" education.



LET'S HEAR FROM TEACHERS AND PARENTS

When the fall season rolls around, teachers experience firsthand the realities that the researchers describe.

"In September, I am excited to teach my students fresh, new material. Instead, I spend the first month re-teaching all of the things that they learned last year. And, after two months away, most of my students aren't in the mood for settling back into a routine anyway. Especially to talk about things they've already studied." Mary C., North Carolina

Many teachers appreciate the opportunity summer provides students to develop vital skills that aren't possible to teach in a traditional school setting.

"Summer is a great time for important enrichment activities. Kids can develop skills that they don't have time for in school like how to steer a canoe, identify plants on the hiking trail and how to climb up rocks. Children learn appropriate risk—

things they don't learn at school because we have taken all things risky out of the day for fear of litigation. Unstructured activities give kids important practice navigating social situations and developing relationships. Any time new skills are being cultivated, individuals are becoming well-rounded and these skills transfer into an ability to work in a classroom." Amy R. Toronto, Canada

Summer learning loss frustrates parents as much as it does teachers and students. Many agree that keeping skills sharp in the summer eliminates the need for tiring review in the fall.

"When we homeschooled, we did so year-round. It eliminated that three weeks of review—especially in math. It also made our learning just a part of everyday life." Kelly N., New York

Many of you already know the benefits and joys of summertime learning and recognize that engaging a child with meaningful activities just makes the day flow more smoothly. Parents who implemented some sort of summer learning into their family's vacation plans reported fewer sibling arguments, a decrease in screen time, and a rise in brighter outlooks.

"I work less in the summer months and I love all of the extra time I have with my kids. I try to make every minute we share count. We do this by going on special field trips, spending more time in the kitchen cooking together, and doing many sports. I feel like we all start the new school year healthier, more energized, and closer as a family." Rachael W., Pennsylvania



Children who struggle in school experience a tremendous amount of stress that often transfers into the home environment.

Parents appreciate the opportunity summer provides to help a child work through challenging material in a way that diminishes the stress and makes learning fun again.

“My daughter has a reading disability and really struggles in school. In the summer, I can be extra sensitive to her special needs. I focus on making reading fun with trips to the library and ice cream cones afterward. I have more time to read fun stuff with her and we are able to really engage with special projects that make reading more fun.”Ann P., Wisconsin

Through these sorts of meaningful experiences, your child gains exposure to new concepts and ideas and has an opportunity to reinforce previously established academic skills.

Many educators agree that reading just six books over the summer will help emergent and reluctant readers avoid losing newly acquired skills. To develop passionate lifelong readers, the grownups need to keep things fun. Arbitrary rules like, “You must read for 20 minutes each day” or, “No outside time until you’ve read two chapters” makes reading another chore for your child to resist.

Reading can be a natural, fun, and inherent element of your child’s life. If you have a reluctant reader, don’t push or nag. Work gently and consistently with your child. Be a team and seek out reading material together that brings your child joy.



Developing **A NATURAL READER**

01

ESTABLISH LIBRARY VISITS

as a regular part of your routine, which your children can anticipate with excitement.

02

LET THEM CATCH YOU READING

More is caught than taught is REAL! Check your own books out at the library and read right along with the kids!

03

LET THEM CHOOSE THEIR OWN BOOKS

Within reason, let your kids choose books to read over the summer. The school year is full of assigned reading. Let them discover what writers and story lines they enjoy most.

04

TRY A SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

There are many challenges sponsored by companies that involve reading certain books and receiving a small prize! Create your own neighborhood reading challenge! Homeschool.com has a free reading challenge that you can do at home with your own kids!

05

HAVE YOUR CHILD READ EVERY DAY

For reluctant readers avoid making a big deal about reading large works, instead make reading a natural part of their life. Read the cereal box, grocery list, or recipes!

06

READ TO YOUR CHILD

Both bookworms and reluctant readers enjoy being read to!

Developing A NATURAL READER *continued*

07

HAVE RELATIVES & FRIENDS SEND POSTCARDS

Postcards are a wonderful glimpse into other places, and summer travels are a perfect time to enjoy them!

08

ENCOURAGE TIME IN THE KITCHEN

Time in the kitchen is a great way to practice reading skills. Your child will have fun looking through cookbooks and researching recipes online.

09

VISIT ZOOS, MUSEUMS, MOVIE THEATERS

All of these places provide ample opportunities for reading. Ask your child to read to you maps, exhibit info, and more!

10

LISTEN TO AUDIO BOOKS & PODCASTS IN THE CAR

This is one of our favorites. You can find digital audio book apps and even podcasts for kids. Pop those on while driving short and long distances and watch the kids get absorbed!

11

PLAY BOARD GAMES

There is no need to buy special educational board games. Old family classics like Monopoly and The Game of Life provide plenty of exposure to words. Scrabble and Boggle are loads of fun as well and are probably already on your shelf!

USE MATH EVERY DAY

Just like reading, math can be a fun and natural part of a relaxed summertime routine. Before the end of the school year, familiarize yourself with the specific skill sets your child has been working on and ask the teacher and your child if they notice any concepts that need extra review. Once you have this information, figure out how you can practice and reinforce these concepts in your everyday life.

GROW A GARDEN



Your child will have fun measuring the distance between the seeds she plants. Teach her to estimate one inch by putting two fingers together. A simple gardening project also provides a chance to measure rainfall and record other interesting bits of data.



STEM CAMP PROGRAMS

These offer fantastic opportunities to practice and develop practical math skills while in a fun camp atmosphere!



PLAY STORE

Practice money math by playing store with young children. Set up a shop with play money and invite older siblings to “shop.” Better yet, open a real lemonade stand or have a yard sale.



TEEN SUMMER JOBS

This is a perfect time to teach your child smart money managing tips as well as saving and investing. Your teen will welcome having their own money and this is a perfect time to open a checking or savings account.



DIY PROJECTS

Summer renovation plans? Let the kids help and use math to measure. Small projects that the kids can make on their own are perfect. Home Depot and Lowes often have kid’s sessions.

LET'S GET STARTED!

Summer slide does not happen because kids close their textbooks, stop sitting at desks, and choose to go swimming instead. Summer slide happens when children become disengaged.

With inspiring materials, getting children engaged in learning is easy, productive, and an amazing amount of fun. Children have an innate desire to learn every moment of the day. It's our job to provide them with resources and encouragement and then to step aside and watch the amazing things kids can do when given the freedom of time.

Your reasons for reading this book are likely to be as varied as your children's learning styles and interests. Have fun with this material; approach the upcoming season with an open mind as you consider the exciting possibilities ahead for you and your child or perhaps another child you know who is in need of extra attention and care. The outcome of your efforts will likely be more spectacular than you can possibly imagine.

Summer learning makes simple moments shine. Recognize this time as an opportunity to awaken your child to his or her infinite potential. Seize opportunities wherever they may be. Be open to every possibility!

As you develop your summer learning road map, always keep these fundamental points in mind:

- Keep it fun!
- Create innovative environments and schedules that inspire learning and creativity.
- Let your kids be the primary architects of their own summer learning plan.
- Establish goals for the months ahead, but be open to the possibility that they may evolve along the way.
- Develop individualized learning plans that best suit your child's learning style and interests.
- Have many resources on hand.
- Get outside—often!
- Get organized. Identify tools and systems that work best for your family and use them.
- See new things.
- Meet new people.
- Make the world a better place by broadening your child's mind
- and exposing her to important issues and volunteering opportunities.
- Be realistic and creative when considering how to finance summer opportunities.
- Seek out natural, fun ways of incorporating reading, writing, math, and science into your regular routines.
- Avoid trying to do too much. Focus on the specific needs and desires of your family.
- Laugh a lot and eat delicious food!



"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder... he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in." ~ Rachel Carson

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Enjoy the process



CHAPTER 3

FALLING IN LOVE WITH LEARNING

Learn &
Grow

The approach of summer evokes spectacular images of fun in the sun and a chance to finally slow down and spend more time with our families. In the last months of school, most students can barely contain their excitement as they imagine time with friends, adventures outdoors and perhaps attending camp or going on a family vacation. Summertime is the best!

At the same time, many parents develop anxiety wondering how their children will fill all of the empty hours looming ahead. Perhaps a shortage of time, finances or transportation makes this scenario especially daunting. If you are a family on the road all summer long, though excited by the prospect, you may be looking for ways to maintain some semblance of a regular routine.

Maybe you are simply looking for ways to keep your child's skills sharp over the holiday while expanding his or her thinking in all sorts of wonderful ways. When done right, summertime learning can address all of your goals and concerns by transforming a long stretch of vacation into a meaningful opportunity for adventure, growth, and learning. Summertime learning is also a surefire way to enjoy some serious fun.

What you will learn

You'll learn how to help your child fall in love with "out-of-the-box" learning opportunities.

WHAT IS SUMMER LEARNING?

The ideas and activities collected in this book will be of use to all sorts of families, budgets, schedules, and environments. You can easily adapt most of the ideas I share with you for use with one or several children and with larger groups. All of these resources have something in common: they will provide you and your kids the chance to have fun this summer and to learn at the same time.

Let's begin with what summer learning is not. This book is not an appeal for traditional year-round schooling. Summer vacation is a wonderful tradition and one that is well worth preserving. A break from our usual routines is a chance to replenish creativity, enthusiasm, energy, and spirit. This slower season rejuvenates parents and educators as well by providing a chance to view learning through a different lens and to develop new sets of dynamic learning tools.

Summertime learning is about freedom and learning on our families' terms. It is a chance for each of us to roll up our sleeves and plunge deep into projects that ignite our curiosity. This special season provides a unique opportunity to create educational goals that are in harmony with the specific needs of our kids.

Your child may have the mind of a specialist wanting to delve deep into a single subject—perhaps entomology, calculus, theatre, or the violin. Introduce this child to local professors, members of an acting troupe or musicians in your community. Perhaps you have a young Renaissance kiddo who enjoys sampling a smattering of everything. Summer is a great time to introduce such a child to a range of diverse experiences. At last, there is time to pursue the individual learning needs of your child.



WHO BENEFITS FROM SUMMER LEARNING?

Summertime learning leaves room for uninterrupted, undirected play. Children make some of their most profound discoveries and connections when given the freedom to explore, move and navigate their own learning paths. While mapping your family's plans for the summer, be sure to leave ample time for doing "nothing." Often times, these are the most magical moments of the summer season, allowing incredible opportunities for our kids to flourish.

This summer, your family will develop practices you can easily extend throughout the school year. Some of these practices might just be the best summer souvenirs your family acquires.

Who Benefits from Summer Learning?
The short answer is...everyone! Summer brings with it the freedom to address a wide variety of needs, providing children all kinds of opportunities to thrive and to succeed.

Not all children are natural students. In fact, many struggle in a traditional brick and mortar setting, which can lead to lowered self-esteem and other problems. However, all children are natural learners. Kids come to us hardwired to seek out new experiences they can explore and apply to their own lives.

Summertime learning appeals to the inherent curiosity in all of our children. It is not a punishment for kids with bad grades. If Tom fails math, vacation is not the time for timestable drills that didn't seem to work in the first place. Instead, the summer months are a chance to reintroduce math to Tom, to grab his attention, and to help him see both the value

and fun in this subject. How one goes about doing so depends on Tom's interests. Does he enjoy carpentry, mountain climbing, cooking, or music?

Parents who sit down and ask these questions are taking a perfect first step toward making math come alive for their children. Before he knows it, Tom feels good at math, perhaps returning to school with a fresh outlook and a renewed sense of confidence.

To "reward" a child who had a successful academic year by providing him with a summer plan void of learning opportunities would be a mistake as well. Though a child might have performed well in the classroom, there's no guarantee that the academic year adequately addressed the student's learning needs. Perhaps the teacher was unable to delve as deeply as this child may have liked. Maybe there are new subjects to explore. Learning opportunities are a gift, so don't present them as a chore or a punishment.

Kids aren't the only beneficiaries of summertime learning; parents and teachers have a great time, too. Many children spend the majority of their year absorbing the teachings of adults. This model can be as exhausting for the adult as it is for the child. Summertime is a great chance to give the grownups a break.



Switch places with the children in your life and let them lead the way toward new learning adventures. You'll be amazed by the things you discover when your child becomes a teacher.

During the school year, even the most creative teachers and home educators have a certain amount of required "stuff" we just have to plod through. In the best-case scenario, we find ways to bring this learning to life through a range of engaging practices. Still, as any child will point out, an adult usually determines what students learn during the school year.

In the summertime, all of that changes! It's time to hand over the keys. Let your kids take the wheel and steer the course of their own learning. Ask them what they want to know more about, and help them find the tools they'll need in order to pursue those interests. Then sit back and enjoy the ride.

Shared by Rebecca Kochenderfer

When my son was quite young, I asked him what his #1 goal was. "I want to learn to drive every kind of boat," he told me. Since I knew absolutely nothing about boats, I was uncertain how best to support him. However, as I'm sure you understand, when your child has a dream, you can't just stand there shrugging your shoulders. You have to do something!

Sure enough, the local university was offering a children's boating camp. Each day, campers took turns driving a different kind of boat. Canoes, kayaks, wind surfers and mini sailboats were all a part of the fun. My son attended the camp and enjoyed it so much that he returned for a second summer the following year.

He is twenty-five now and though he did not become a sailor or a sea captain he did grow up knowing that his parents take his dreams seriously and that we believe he can accomplish anything he sets out to do.





KEEP THE FOCUS ON FUN

At the start of the season, we may feel especially ambitious. Mapping out plans for an extraordinary summer is wonderful fun. Let your child's excitement fuel discussions concerning how best to spend the summer months. In the early planning stages, do your best not to put the brakes on any ideas. At the same time, it is helpful to remember that summer is a season for rest and rejuvenation; the goal this season is to grow your family's curiosity and love of learning. This may require moving at a slower pace than you are accustomed to during the rest of the year.

Of course, if your child's plans involve other people—such as is the case with volunteer work or summer employment—she must honor those commitments. However, there may be instances in which a child identifies a more personal goal; perhaps she aims to read all of Shakespeare's works by August. Commend her for coming up with this admirable plan but should she find it to be unrealistic or less interesting than she'd expected, encourage her to recalibrate and come up with a new plan that excites her.

By providing our kids the space and freedom to pursue their unique interests joyfully now, we are encouraging them to become life learners who continuously seek out new experiences and ideas and engage deeply with their environment and the people in their lives.

LIFE LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH EXPERIENCE

These traits will serve them well down the road. Should our children run into financial difficulties, they can learn their way out of them by strategizing a new plan. If their job downsizes or their industry fades out, life learners are better able to adapt and develop a new trade or career path. When health challenges arise, they can research to determine the best way to manage the problem. For these reasons, inspired learning is a vital part of every child's education.

CHANGING HOW WE VIEW SUMMER LEARNING

“The natural opportunity for learning during the summer months is exciting to me. I love all of the little moments that come up and make new discoveries possible—all without any need for curriculum.”

- Jill W., Tennessee

In creating artificial divisions between school time and vacation time, we send our kids the message that learning is something unpleasant we get to escape from in the summer. When families make it a point to pursue learning opportunities enthusiastically throughout the year, we are telling our kids that we value learning. We let them know that being open to new experiences, knowledge and discovery is our family’s way of life. It may look more sparkly, quirky, and colorful in the summer than in February perhaps, but the message remains the same—always, we are individuals striving to learn, to grow, and to try new things.

Shared by Rebecca Kochenderfer

“My parents died when I was eight-and-a-half years old. The months following my parents’ death were extremely difficult. Stomachaches and nightmares bothered me constantly as I struggled to navigate my deep loss. School was also a challenge; I was the new kid and that is never easy. Even more painful was my growing awareness that, academically, I was lagging far behind my peers.

An announcement of the Willy Wonka reading contest came just in time. I listened intensely to my teacher, Mr. Hagrid, as he explained the contest rules to my fifth-grade class. He told us the student who read the most books would receive a certificate, a giant chocolate bar, and a free karate lesson. I really wanted that chocolate bar. And, in the depths of my soul, I wanted to be a winner. So, I read like crazy. I devoured and digested pages and pages of books.

My hard work paid off: I won the contest. Hearing my name announced in front of all of my peers affected me deeply. I felt a shift in my entire sense of self as my confidence grew.

This achievement made me eligible to attend a summer school program for academically gifted students. There, I learned about new ideas that challenged and engaged my thinking. My natural curiosity received attention and it blossomed. For the first time in my life, I believed in my own intelligence.

It pains me to think how things might have turned out if I had spent that summer with low achievers instead of in a summer program for gifted kids. I imagine us all stuck indoors together, forced to review dry, old material while wearing invisible labels marking us as the “bad students.”

Summer learning must be inspired learning; it is travel and it is fun times in the kitchen. Summer learning is exposure to great films, music, and dance; it is about movement, exploration, and calculated intelligent risk. Summer learning is hands-on, experimental, and—above all else—deeply personal.

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Enjoy the process



CHAPTER 4

CREATIVE WAYS TO ORGANIZE

Learn &
Grow

Most likely, some percentage of your child's summer learning will take place at home. You'll want to start the season off right with a special space that cultivates all of the essential elements of deep learning— experimentation, exploration, creativity and play.

Have you got yourself an artist, scientist or musician? Maybe you do and you just don't know it yet. Accessible, organized spaces are especially helpful in supporting creative pursuits of this kind; they may even help uncover latent skills and hidden talents. If you have the space to do it, design specialized work areas throughout your home and outdoors. These spaces don't need to be large; find corners in and around your home you think might do the job. Think of these as "discovery stations." Designate places where special projects don't have to come down but that you can simply tidy up at the end of the day.

What you will learn

Activity: Create Discovery Stations That Inspire

Benefit: Discovery stations support creative pursuits and hidden talents.

LEARNING CENTERS ARE FUN!

When my children were young, we set up an art area, a science center, a cozy reading nook, and a space just for music. For fun, I left out a microscope and instructions for the kids to stumble upon “accidentally.” The piano’s cover was always left up—an open invitation to come and tinkle the keys.

Our school area made a magnificent art station that I stocked full of tempera paints and a lot of Play-Doh. The refrigerator became a giant bulletin board where we’d display my children’s art.

You can keep these spaces fresh by periodically adding new resources. For example, unfamiliar books, maps, science equipment, art supplies, sheet music and treasures found on a walk will always catch your child’s attention and draw him back for more play and exploration.

Before preparing space for summer learning, look around your home and see it through the eyes of your child.

Let these questions be your guide as you prepare your home for a summer of playful learning.



LEARNING CENTER FAQ

DO THEY HAVE WHAT THEY NEED?



Are the tools your child needs all there and easily accessible for learning when they are in the mood?

CAN THEY WORK INDEPENDENTLY?



If you aren't around, is your child able to safely and independently work at the center?

IS THERE SPACE TO RUN FREELY



Children need lots of space to run and move freely without fear of breaking something or injuring themselves.

IS THERE AN AREA WHERE NOISE IS OK?



Are there areas where the kids are free to be loud and crazy?

IS THERE A PLACE TO ESCAPE THE NOISE?



Sometimes children need a few minutes alone in quiet away from their siblings and friends. Make sure there are spaces for this.

INSPIRATION

**“WHEN YOU LEAVE A
BEAUTIFUL PLACE, YOU
CARRY IT WITH YOU
WHEREVER YOU GO.”**

- ALEXANDRA STODDARD



TURNING YOUR KITCHEN INTO A LEARNING STATION

What is the benefit from turning your kitchen into a learning center? Kids feel confident and good about helping others.

Relinquishing some of our control in the kitchen isn't always easy. Providing access to messy ingredients and sharp knives can test our patience and our nerves! Nevertheless, the kitchen is a place where amazing learning takes place. Preparing meals for the family is one of the first opportunities for kids to feel competent and helpful to others. So, take a deep breath and start cooking.

As soon as your child is old enough, it's time to place tools where he can reach them. If this is not possible, invest in a good portable stool he can maneuver himself.

From as early as possible, the kitchen should be a place where your child feels welcome. Make it a place where he can prepare healthy, delicious foods. And the child who is old enough to cook in the kitchen is old enough to clean up the kitchen.

If your child is young, agree that by the end of summer, he will have all of the skills he needs to plan a special dinner for the family. He will learn to plan the menu, purchase the ingredients, prepare the meal, serve it up, and clean up afterward.

If your child is older, make a plan to focus on the cuisine of a specific region. Research, collect, and use exotic spices and ingredients together. Your child could also throw a dinner party for family and friends or he could choose an elderly neighbor or a family with a newborn and prepare a home-cooked meal for them.

- *Kids Cooking Without a Stove* by Aileen Paul
- *Snacktivities!: 50 Edible Activities for Parents and Young Children* by MaryAnn F. Kohl
- *Baking with Kids: Make Bread, Muffins, Cookies, Pies, Pizza Dough, and More!* by Leah Brooks
- *Teens Cook: How to Cook What You Want to Eat* by Megan Carle and Jill Carle
- *The International Cookbook for Kids* by Matthew Locricchio
- *Joy of Cooking* by Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker



TURN CLUTTER INTO WEEKLY ACTIVITY BAGS

This activity creates calm spaces, is great for babysitters and gets kids away from the TV.

The toys our children play with provide much more than a way to pass the time. Well-selected toys inspire deep learning of all kinds. Acquire new toys with that thought in mind. However, just as these treasures can enhance learning, they can hinder it too; as our grandmothers warned, too much of a good thing can be too much.

Take some time to de-clutter your child's play spaces. If she is old enough, encourage her to be a part of this process. Sort through the toys and identify a few special favorites that will remain out at all times. Remember, this is not a punishment and should never feel like one. Keep this process playful. If you think it'll help, you can even make a game out of it!

To create weekly activity bags, have large plastic tote bags on hand, each big enough to contain a week's worth of items for play. There should be enough containers to represent each week of the summer or whatever timeframe you wish. Make a pile of toys for each bag and be certain each collection fosters a range of playtime activities including opportunities for physical, fine motor, imaginative and sensory games.

As you add toys to each pile, engage in conversation with your child. Discuss the rationale for each pile's contents and ask your child for input. When you are through, put the bags somewhere out of view where your child will not see them.

After this job is completed, take a moment to pause with your child. Reflect on how calm the space feels and congratulate her on a job well done. Consider aloud how much fun it will be to open each bag later on and play with everything inside.

The day your summer learning plan begins, take out the first bag. It will feel like Christmas when your child opens it up! Make sure the process is ceremonious; make it a shiny big deal. Invite older siblings to "ooh" and "ahh" as your little one opens the bag. Talk with your child about all of the possibilities that each item contains. For extra fun, wrap the bag in colorful paper; add a few simple items inside that your child hasn't seen before such as inexpensive craft items, bubbles, stickers and new crayons or sidewalk chalk.

When the week is over, bag up these items and bring out the next tote. With less clutter and fewer distractions, a child's ability to concentrate deepens. Play becomes more imaginative as the child finds new ways to engage with old toys.



FUN OUTDOOR LEARNING SPACES

Outdoor learning inspires a child's independence, engagement, and joyful curiosity.

Do you have a garage or outdoor shed on your property? Have some fun organizing a section of that area and equipping it with easily accessible tools for outdoor fun. Assemble a collection of butterfly nets, magnifying glasses, empty jars for soil or water sampling, gardening tools, wood scraps, and tools for building. Gather binoculars, a kid-friendly nature guidebook, sunblock, and hats along with a sturdy travel bag, notebook, and pens. Keep everything in one place so the kids can grab these items and take off on adventures whenever inspiration strikes.

If you have a young child (or perhaps an older child who isn't accustomed to a lot of time outdoors), take some time to look over the surrounding landscape together. Discuss where the best bugs might be. Where are the wild raspberries growing? What corner of the yard yields the best mud for mucking in? And earthworms! Where are the earthworms? In no time, your child will know the answers to all of these questions. Your curiosity and enthusiasm are important first steps to help get your child's wheels turning.

Most of us don't live in mansions with ample square footage; our homes may already feel too short on space. The ideas I've shared here don't require sprawling spaces. Have fun planning, organizing, de-cluttering and using your imagination. Avoid the temptation to focus on perceived shortcomings of your space. Instead, work within its parameters and let it become a haven that inspires your child's independence, engagement and joyful curiosity.

- *Backyard Adventure: How to Create Outdoor Play Spaces for Kids* by Paula Brooks
- *Bird Watching for Kids: Bite-sized Learning & Backyard Projects* by George H. Harrison
- *Wildflowers, Blooms & Blossoms (Take-Along Guide)* by Diane Burns
- *Trees, Leaves & Bark (Take-Along Guide)* by Diane Burns
- *Caterpillars, Bugs and Butterflies (Take-Along Guide)* by Mel Boring



CREATE ROADSCHOOL KITS

Turns tiresome car rides into a time for engaging learning and fun. Doing so also provides an opportunity to explore new activities in a distraction-free space.

Hours in the car driving to classes, music lessons, sporting events and friends' homes can grow tiresome—for children and for adults. But, what if I told you that it is possible to turn time on the road into a fabulous opportunity for learning and fun?

To begin, let's stop thinking of our cars simply as objects that get us from point A to point B. Envision your vehicle as a space to maximize and enjoy much like a comfortable room in your home. Consider whether this space is well-organized and kid-friendly. Does it inspire opportunities for meaningful learning? Can your children access its contents without asking for help?

There are several items available to help organize space in the car, but nothing beats a good backseat organizer. Available in different styles, backseat organizers slide over the back of the seat in front of your child. With pockets for books, art supplies, music, and food, this item makes it easy for your child to access anything he needs.

Make each roadschooling travel kit to fill your child's backseat organizer with a variety of auditory, visual and tactile items. Be sure to use items that won't melt in the car! Rotate kits on a weekly basis so that the materials feel fresh and new. Kids also love repetition, so don't be afraid to cycle items back into the kits regularly as well.

Your child will look forward to this new tradition. To keep things efficient, prepare a number of kits in advance and store them in boxes inside your home. When items in your child's backseat organizer lose appeal, simply pull out another kit and add its contents to the organizer.

There is no need to break the bank with this activity. Use items you have on hand that your child hasn't seen for a while. Shop at yard sales and thrift shops and keep an eye out for sales.



The number of materials placed inside of the kits should correlate with your length of travel time. Your child is less likely to feel interrupted if there isn't a large number of left over, unexplored items in her kit when you reach your destination.

Contents children can adapt for use in a variety of ways are most appealing to children. Provide materials that suit open-ended activities and self-determined play. It's great fun to listen as an excited child rifles through his kit calling out, "Mom, let's listen to a little Beethoven. Would you like me to read you a story, Dad? Do you know how to say 'fish' in Spanish?"

This is just the tip of the iceberg! Time in the car with our kids can inspire new methods of teaching and learning in a number of ways. Make the most of every moment and see what kind of wonderful fun unfolds.

ITEMS FOR YOUR ROADSCHOOL KIT

- Art supplies
- Activity books
- Manipulatives like tangrams, Rubik's cube, wooden beads, lacing cards
- Small stuffed animals and plastic animals or action figures to encourage imaginative play
- Subject-specific objects like flashcards, maps, calculators, and workbooks
- Reading materials
- Ipads with educational apps
- Ipods with pre-loaded child-appropriate stories and songs
- Snacks and water



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Enjoy the process



CHAPTER 5

GOALS THAT IGNITE IMAGINATION

Learn &
Grow

Shared by Jamie Gaddy

I have always believed that goal setting was key to achievement. When I embark on a new project or idea, I kick things off by setting practical, achievable goals. It's like creating a roadmap for success! With life's constant hustle and bustle, it's easy to get sidetracked. But goal setting helps me declutter my mind and brings a sense of calm. Armed with this clarity, I'm ready to take action and make things happen!

My kids are nearly grown, some still homeschooling, some are in college, and some are married. But, when I think back on their early years, I am sure that one of the most important jobs I had and still have as a parent is to encourage their dreams and to help them find their future calling. I've done this in various ways but at the beginning of each school year, I simply asked them, "What is your goal this year?" Today, I still ask them this question because I see its positive effect. Setting one's own goals provides the sense of control needed to move forward with the wild and beautiful dreaming that makes life so sweet.

Whether our children aspire to be teachers, nurses, mechanics, or goat herders it's our responsibility as parents to help them find their path. Hear them, see them, and guide them.

What you will learn

Practice writing and crafting goals that are specific and measurable.



One of our favorite ways to set goals is by using 3 stars and a wish. Start by discussing with the children about the things they feel they do well. Encourage them to brainstorm and share their achievements and skills. These “stars” represent positive aspects of their abilities and accomplishments. Discuss how these achievements make them feel and celebrate their successes.

After identifying their stars, guide the children to think about something they’d like to improve or work on. This becomes their “wish.” It could be related to academics, social skills, hobbies, or personal growth. Encourage them to choose a specific area where they want to see progress.

Once they have their wish, help children create a plan to achieve it. Break down the goal into smaller steps, making it more manageable. Discuss strategies, resources, and actions needed to move toward their wish. Teachers and parents play a crucial role in providing guidance and encouragement throughout this process.

YOUR THOUGHTS:

YOUR CHILD'S PREFERRED METHOD OF LEARNING

Maybe your child doesn't have a number one goal just yet. That is ok! Summer learning provides the perfect opportunity to explore a wide range of activities. Repeated exposure to new ideas, experiences, and people will grow your child's passion. In time, he will be able to identify and articulate clear goals that he feels deeply about.

Summer learning is about individualized learning. It's our chance to seek and create environments to meet the specific learning needs of our kids. An understanding of how your child assimilates information can help guide your selection of activities and learning materials for the season ahead.

Understanding and Supporting Your Child's Unique Learning Preference
In general, we rely on three methods to learn about the world.

- Visual (seeing)
- Auditory (hearing)
- Tactile/Kinesthetic (touching)
- Verbal (speaking or written word)

Although most of us use some combination of these approaches, we tend to prefer one method to the rest. What method of learning does your child most often seek out?

Your child's learning preference might be immediately evident or it may take some time to put your finger on it. Get started by observing your child while he is at work and playing. You'll find out a lot this way.

There are also several online tools to help determine one's learning preference. If your child is interested, she might enjoy trying a free online quiz like the one found at [Homeschool.com](https://www.homeschool.com/learning-preference-quiz).

- [Learning Preference Quiz](#)

It's perfectly natural to favor teaching methods that complement our learning styles. As an auditory learner, I want to explain things by talking but I have learned that this method works with only one of my children. My other children require a variety of opportunities for visual, verbal, and hands-on learning. Identifying and using the method of learning that works best for your child ensures a smoother process and a whole lot more fun.

Studies have shown that it is beneficial to encourage students to acquire learning skills within the other learning styles. However, teaching within a child's preferred method of learning will typically foster more motivation and learning will be less tedious for them.

LEARNING *Preferences*



VERBAL LEARNERS

- Visual learners process information by reading and writing
- They remember details best if they read them
- Need opportunities for quiet time to pursue personal interests, more comfortable working alone
- Typically don't handle long lectures well



AURAL LEARNERS

- Process information by listening
- Enjoys having someone read to them, loves podcasts
- Often responsive to music and art, rhyming games, read-alouds, and repeating new information
- Most find background noise distracting



TACTILE LEARNERS

- Learn by doing
- Process information by movement and touch
- Enjoys hands-on experiments and field trips
- Uses movement to cement understanding of concepts and ideas
- Requires frequent breaks from formal learning



VISUAL LEARNERS

- Learn through images, videos, graphs, and diagrams
- Need imagery in verbal content
- Arrange content in visual format - like venn diagrams, word walls
- Students remember best if they can draw the concept themselves

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Enjoy the process

First Steps For A SUMMER PLAN

START A PLAN

Call your child and plan to do something together they enjoy. Make a snack together or take a walk... share what you have learned so far. He might find it interesting to know how he learns has a name.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Give your child plenty of time to ask questions. Like all of us, kids appreciate being consulted and listened to. Your child is far more likely to engage enthusiastically in this plan if their ideas are valued and considered.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- *What do you think summer learning is?*
- *Do you have any concerns about the summer ahead?*
- *How are you happiest spending your time?*
- *When is learning difficult?*
- *When is learning fun?*
- *Do you prefer working alone or with others?*
- *Describe your perfect day.*
- *This summer, do you look forward to spending more time pursuing interests at home or out in the community?*
- *Which of these are most important to you right now—working, volunteering, learning a skill, playing, traveling, or meeting new people?*
- *List the books, music, movies, and plays you'd like to enjoy over the summer.*
- *Name five daytrips that you would like to do together.*
- *How will we stay healthy and fit this summer?*
- *Name something you've always wanted to do but were afraid to try, such as swimming in the deep end, attending sleepaway camp, or rock climbing. Let's plan to try it this summer.*
- *Name three things you wish you knew more about.*
- *If you could meet anyone—dead or alive—who would it be and why?*



INSPIRING RESOURCES & FUN SCHEDULES

Summertime is a tremendous period of learning and growth, but it is also a chance to pause and reflect. Ideally, a child's summertime schedule looks different than it does during the traditional school year. The summertime schedule should be fluid and flexible. It should have plenty of space to absorb spontaneous plans, unexpected visitors, and any need for solitude and reflection.

Most of us, if left to our own devices, have a deeply ingrained natural rhythm we'll adhere to if given the chance. On a day you don't need to be anywhere, watch your child and see if his natural rhythms are evident. The best schedules are simply a rhythm that corresponds to their natural rhythm but also accounts for specific tasks.

- What time does your child naturally wake up and fall asleep?
- When does your child get hungry?
- What time of day is your child's highest and lowest levels of energy?
- When is their attention sharpest?
- When do they need time to be alone or require a change of scenery?
- When is your child most responsive to physical activity?

EXCITING LEARNING RESOURCES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Your local craft shops and bookstores—as well as many sites online—are full of kid-friendly materials to enrich your summer learning plans.

Involve your child in choosing materials. This is a great opportunity to teach consumer skills. Your child can practice staying within a budget. She can learn to consider the quality of each product and determine if it's something she'll use regularly. Look online together or browse through catalogs and discover the wonderful possibilities. Some of our favorites include:

Rainbow Resource Center
Christian Book
School Specialty Store



SCHEDULE ADVICE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

“My 7-year-old son wakes up early in the morning full of energy. By 6:30 am, he is ready for something fun to do and meanwhile, I’m still wishing I were in bed! Early on, I recognized that we need a tight morning schedule in the summertime.

When he wakes up, he usually comes into my room to wish me a good morning. I get up, help him prepare breakfast, and talk about the day. He does much better if he knows the plan for the day ahead, so while he eats we talk about what the entire day ahead will look like—right down to what we are eating for supper.

After breakfast, he reads books while I do a few chores and get ready for the day. I make sure there are always new things to find in the box and he has a lot of fun looking through it for treasures. When I’ve finished doing what I have to do, I sit with him and we read two or three of the books together.

Next, we usually do some sort of structured activity like painting, a nature walk, a puzzle or a science experiment. My son focuses better in the mornings. Also, if he has my full attention in the early hours, he is more independent in the afternoon.

After that, we have a snack and clean up our morning mess. By then he is ready to play on his own and I use this time to prepare for lunch and get a few more things done around the house.

When we finish lunch, we like to get out of the house. This usually means having a play date with friends, going to the pool, or (if it’s hot) heading to an air-conditioned place like the library or science museum.

Dinner and bedtime happen at the same time each evening. It’s so easy to let these things slide in the summer, but I know my son feels so much better when we are consistent.

- Mandy W., Texas



SCHEDULE ADVICE FOR TEENS

My 14-year-old daughter is a late sleeper. She would stay in bed until lunch if she could. I'm grateful for the rest she gets during summer vacation. But, during the school year, she is very busy and always has a difficult time getting up in the morning. However, when I let her sleep too late she's up late at night.

I have two other younger children who are up early and we all go to bed early. It doesn't feel right to have one family member's schedule so out of sync with everyone else's, yet I don't want to get into a pattern where I am nagging her to get up each day. Instead, we schedule a lot of the fun stuff away from the house during the earlier parts of the day.

Last summer, each morning started with some sort of activity she had come up with herself. She volunteered three days each week at an animal shelter up the road from our home. She practiced piano with her teacher one morning and pottery on another morning. Since it was her idea to do each of these things, it was easy to get her moving at a reasonable time—but not too early. She was sure not to plan anything for before 10:00 am!

I like the kids to help around the house—they learn a lot from this. At around 3:00 pm, we all get in the garden together to weed and pick food for dinner. My daughter is a talented cook and she helps me out in the kitchen all of the time—especially in the summer. We try to cook dinner together at least three nights a week in the summer.

I don't want to overschedule my daughter's time in the summer, but I like her to have enough on her plate to be sure she doesn't just sleep her vacation away. We have struck a very nice balance between structured and unstructured activities."

- Wendy T., New Jersey





SCHEDULE ADVICE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

As a dad of two boys ages 9 and 6 (the younger of whom has Down's syndrome), I am always on my toes.

This is especially true in the summer when the days sometimes seem endless and the kids are out of school.

For us, finding a good balance of fun, productivity, and relaxation in the summer means making a daily routine with a lot of flexibility. I don't send the boys to camp or anything, but I find myself (and them) wanting to do *something* each day. This doesn't have to be going somewhere and spending money—though sometimes we go to a museum or a movie. Some of my favorite days are those where we don't even get in the car.

A typical summer day for us involves waking up at 6:00 am (yes, still!) and having breakfast right away. Then, we usually have some free time until about 9:00 am. In our house, free time means TV shows and video games mostly but sometimes it means wrestling, board games, reading, or outdoor play, if I'm lucky.

We are usually at home until lunchtime. Because of my little one's disability, I know it is often hard for my older son to engage and play with his little brother. After I get a few things done, I usually step in and engage more actively with them, which means going out. We walk in the woods or bike, scooter, pogo stick, or rollerblade. If it is rainy, we are more likely to go somewhere like the movies, a cafe, or a local museum.

We usually return to the house for lunch and then engage in an afternoon activity. If we do *something* in the afternoon, it is easier to transition back home to make dinner and relax.

No matter what we have planned, I tend to go with what the kids want to do. At times, I will get all excited to go for a day trip but they say, 'No, we just want to stay at home.' In such cases, we save the day trip for another day. It's summer, after all, and we have very few obligations. I love it this way and I think my kids do too!"

-John L., California

MODELING GOOD HABITS: SETTING PERSONAL GOALS

As you read this, are you wishing you were a kid again and could immerse yourself in a summer learning plan of your own? If so, keep reading because I have good news for you! Growing your interests and skills is an integral part of a family's learning plan and of parenthood.

Children learn through observation. For instance, if we want to raise children who enjoy good books, we must first model our love of reading. If our sons and daughters are going to enjoy playing outdoors, they need to see us frequently engaging with natural settings. Similarly, kids learn to make sensible food choices by watching adults eat wisely during mealtimes. This leads me to believe that modeling life learning for our children is vital and is an extraordinarily profound act of love.

Summer is the perfect time to model the same curiosity, persistence, and love of learning you wish to instill in your child. Is there an author whose work has intrigued you forever, though you haven't yet made the time to read works by him or her? Have you ever thought it might be fun to write poetry or to learn how to paint with oils? Maybe you wish you knew enough to fix your car. Identify the sort of learning you find most satisfying, spend time reflecting on each unexpected idea you discover, and consider the following:

- How will learning this subject or skill enrich my summer?
- Is this something I want to do with my child?
- Do I have the time and resources required to take on this subject?
- What will my child gain from seeing me engage with this form of learning?
- When can I get started?

Those with very young children may find that now is not the season to take on ambitious learning projects requiring long periods and concentration. Attempts to study Russian, learn to weave, or cook a five-course gourmet meal might yield more frustration than joy.

However you choose to use your free time, be gentle with yourself. Becoming a parent is an enormous shift in one's life and you are likely to feel overextended or more easily overwhelmed during this period. This time with little ones is short though—too short. Be in these moments 100% and cherish them as the gifts that they are.

Even those of us with toddlers can pursue some form of adult enrichment that replenishes us and models a love of learning. No matter how busy your days are be true to yourself, model the kind of life you want your child to have, and practice good self-care. Find activities to which your littlest learner can relate. Doing crafts side by side is one idea. Gardening, nature study, exercise, and yoga are all things you might find appealing both to you and to your young child.

Whatever activity you select, it is most likely to succeed if it is hands-on, experiential, and inspires loads of laughter.

PERSONAL GOALS

As your child grows older and increasingly independent, coming up with ways to share time can be more challenging. At the same time, you might also be excited to discover more opportunities to pursue your interests now. This is a significant shift in the life of your family and one to acknowledge and affirm. Celebrate this new period of growth by taking a class together.

If your interests are different from those of your older child, consider pursuing options for online learning. Put on a pot of tea for you and the kids, then pull out your laptops and headsets and enjoy working side by side, each on your coursework. The list below highlights some of the amazing learning opportunities for free!

- **Online Courses and Tutorials:** Numerous platforms offer free courses on a wide range of topics. Websites like Coursera, edX, and Khan Academy provide high-quality content from universities and experts.
- **YouTube:** YouTube is a treasure trove of educational content. You can find channels dedicated to science, history, art, music, and more. Just search for your interests, and you'll likely find engaging videos.
- **Podcasts:** Podcasts cover diverse subjects, from personal development to niche interests. You can listen while commuting, exercising, or doing household chores. Check out platforms like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or Google Podcasts.
- **Read Books:** Visit your local library or explore digital libraries like Project Gutenberg or LibriVox. You'll find classic literature, non-fiction, and self-help books—all for free.
- **Learn a New Language:** Apps like Duolingo and Memrise offer free language courses. Practice speaking with native speakers through language exchange websites like Tandem.
- **Coding and Programming:** Websites like Codecademy and freeCodeCamp teach coding languages and web development. Learning to code opens up many opportunities.
- **Practice Typing:** Improve your typing speed and accuracy with the Livechat Typing Speed Test¹. Efficient typing skills are valuable in today's digital world.
- **Join Online Communities:** Participate in forums, discussion boards, and social media groups related to your interests. Engage with others, ask questions, and share knowledge.
- **Explore Open Educational Resources (OER):** OER platforms provide free textbooks, lecture notes, and educational materials. Examples include OpenStax and MERLOT.
- **Learn from Experts:** Attend free webinars, workshops, and conferences. Many organizations offer virtual events where experts share their knowledge.
- **Free Online Business Course:** Start your own business and take a course to learn how.

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Enjoy the process



CHAPTER 6

OBSTACLES TO SUMMER LEARNING

Learn &
Grow

Shared by Jamie Gaddy

Summer learning is a fabulous way to connect with your kids and engage with the sort of activities and interests that most energize and excite them. Summer learning is a time to stretch and to grow—to travel outside of comfort zones and engage with the world in new and inspiring ways.

As you present the ideas in this book, you may find that your child shares your enthusiasm. From the start, some kids dive in headfirst and test the deep waters right away. If this is the case, the greatest challenge is stretching the days out long enough to accommodate your child's curiosity and wonder.

However, this won't be the case with every child. Don't be discouraged if the response to your first attempts at summer learning is trepidation, reluctance, or apathy. Fatigue and school burnout can make a child balk at what they may think is "more school."

A child's resistance isn't the only obstacle you might encounter. Tight finances, demanding work schedules, and uncomfortable weather are all obstacles to consider before the summer begins. Fortunately, with a little creativity, parents can overcome most hurdles.

What you will learn

Ideas for working together to accomplish goals that benefit each member of the family!



MY CHILD IS NOT ON BOARD!

Kids are busy. During the year of homeschooling and full days of learning many spend their afternoons, evenings, and weekends engaged in rigorous afterschool programs, household chores, and even part-time jobs.

It is natural, then, that many kids suffer from “busy” burnout by June. They look forward to summer as a time to regroup and recover from the frenetic homeschool year. Hearing that mom or dad wants them to spend even some of their vacation time “learning” might sound alarm bells!

Avoiding this anxiety is easy. Providing your child with a concise, clear picture of the summer’s possibilities will eliminate confusion, resentment, and misunderstanding. Introduce summer learning as the new and exciting thing that it is. Begin by sharing the key features of summer learning with your child.

- interest-based
- everywhere—outdoors, on a stage, in the kitchen, on the basketball court, in a cozy reading nook, at summer camp, on a hammock, with friends,
- hands-on
- discovery and fun
- whatever you (the child) want it to be!

Summer Learning is not

- an extension of the school year
- about right and wrong answers
- about tests and memorization
- about staying busy for the sake of it
- about learning what other people want you to learn



MY CHILD WOULD RATHER SLEEP

Summertime learning can be about sharpening soccer skills, learning French, or gathering seashells at the beach; it's also a perfect time to focus on health and developing better sleeping habits.

Your child's desire to sleep may be especially obvious when school is not in session and he isn't waking up to head anywhere. As you establish a sensible summer schedule, don't worry if your child thinks this means starting the day later than you'd envisioned. Most medical professionals agree teens require between 8 and 10 hours of sleep each night. Many older children do not get enough sleep—according to the [National Sleep Foundation](#), only 15% of teens reported sleeping at least 8 1/2 hours on school nights.

Summer learning is flexible and can easily accommodate your child's need to catch up on rest. Sleeping in will feel less disruptive if the schedule you establish with your child is realistic. Organize activities and events later in the day to avoid feeling pressured and rushed. The summer months provide a perfect opportunity to reset one's internal clock and get back into a sleep schedule that is sensible and restorative.

On the other hand, Insomnia is a common and serious complaint among teens. Too much of a good thing can be a problem as well, address your concerns openly and with humor to avoid turning this into an area of conflict.

As is often the case, this is a wonderful opportunity for learning and growth. Encouraging children to establish good sleep habits now is a gift that will last them a lifetime.

- Avoid napping during the day.
- Look for fun ways throughout the day to get the exercise your body requires.
- Avoid sugar, caffeine, and heavy meals before bed.
- Turn off television, computers, and phones at least an hour before bed.
- Enjoy calming activities such as reading, meditation, or a warm bath before bed.
- Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day. The body will recognize the signals that tell it it's time for sleep.

MY CHILD WOULD RATHER PLAY VIDEO GAMES

This topic stirs up a lot of emotion in both kids and parents. As schedules slow down for summer, it becomes a central issue in many households. Like most things in parenting, there are no easy answers and how one chooses to help a child manage screen time is a very personal decision. The “right answer” will look different for each family. Follow your gut; you are the expert. You know your child better than anyone else does and you are most qualified to determine what sort of presence screen time has in your family.

If you are unsure whether your family’s current screen time practices are a help or a hindrance in your home, try asking yourself the following:

- Is my child spending time with family and friends?
- Does my child engage in self-directed activities that do not involve screens?
- Does my child explore the outdoors?
- Does my child get enough exercise?
- When did my child last pick up a book?
- When did my child last travel outside his comfort zone to try something new?
- How does my child respond when I ask her to turn off the device and shift her attention to a new activity?

Whether you choose to be screen-free, allow your child freedom to establish limits himself, or fall somewhere in the middle, summer learning can complement and support your decision.

You may want to try being screen-free during the day. Organize your home and your schedule in ways that provide alternatives to television. Accessible art supplies, musical instruments, sports, books, field trips, and fun with friends can fill the day in all sorts of wondrous ways. Check in with your kids to ask how it feels being screen-free and discuss what new things they’ve been able to accomplish and enjoy because of this special time.





MY BUDGET IS TIGHT

Summer learning doesn't need to break the bank. Summer learning is about connecting your child through meaningful activities and people who inspire him. It is about having fun, growing your child's sense of accomplishment, and cultivating their desire to learn more. You can accomplish these goals on a shoestring budget!

- Start a book club and invite friends.
- Keep a close eye on your local paper's event calendar. Museums, libraries, and universities offer many free events in the summer.
- Attend free concerts. This is a perfect way to introduce new styles of music to your child without the financial risk.
- Write, direct, and star in a play. Depending on your child's age, this production can be a simple event organized in less than an hour or an elaborate summer-long process involving the help of siblings and neighborhood kids.
- Produce a neighborhood talent show.
- Help others by volunteering at local hospitals, nursing homes, and animal shelters.
- Check with museums in your hometown to see if they offer discounts. If you intend to visit particular museums or nature centers frequently, consider becoming a member. The cost savings can be significant.
- Ask a family member or a close friend to spend special time with your child pursuing a shared interest.
- Home Depot and Lowe's offer monthly building workshops for kids ages 5-12. The projects are simple, fun, and free.
- Hike Trails in your area!
- Go camping in your backyard. Use [Homeschool.com's Free At-Home Summer Camp Kit!](https://homeschool.com/free-at-home-summer-camp-kit)
- Train for a race.
- Write a book, a song, or a new computer program.
- Hold an end-of-summer art show/art auction and donate the proceeds to a charity!
- Tinker and invent amazing new things.
- Teach the dog new tricks.
- Plant a garden.

SUMMER TALENT SHOW IDEA

Shared by Lisa F. . New York

I started our neighborhood talent show the summer my children were 5, 3 and 1. Two things inspired this project. First, my oldest son was painfully shy. He was often around loving grandparents, cousins and friends and he participated in many organized sports. We also encouraged his interests and hobbies, yet he would remain either stoic or clung to my leg in tears when anyone other than immediate family tried to talk with him.

Second, I see myself raising future community leaders who might need to give speeches in front of large organizations and I believe social confidence makes us happier. For these reasons, helping my son work through his shyness was important to me. I believe kids work out many of their challenges through creative play and a community talent show seemed like a perfect way to help my son develop his confidence.

This was the first summer my children were old enough to have impromptu play dates. I had always dreamed of having a village home that all the neighborhood kids flocked to and that dream was becoming a reality. However, unstructured play all day every day sometimes resulted in chaos.

I hosted the first Annual Haley Drive Talent Show to give their summer play some guidance and to help my son work through his fears.

I chose a date, gathered the neighborhood kids, and asked them to have a part in the planning process. Together, we wrote out all the things we'd need help with such as set design, lighting, the sound system, food, and drinks. We made lists of the talent acts and discussed costumes, make-up, dancing, crowd participation, and word articulation. In the email invitation I sent weeks before the event, I asked audience members to bring a snack to share and a blanket or a lawn chair for sitting. I also hired an M.C. with a Master's degree in music and many years of stage experience. Before the show, he came over a few times to give the kids a chance to practice with the microphone and to provide performance tips.

On a gorgeous August evening, we had 90 minutes of fun entertainment—from dancing, singing and piano to hula hooping, magic tricks and jokes. Performers ranged in age from 4 to 74! We also had 125 spectators who attended the show.

We've been doing our summer talent show for four years now. My son has grown into a smiley, confident 8-year-old and our neighborhood has fun planning for our big event!"

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Enjoy the process



CHAPTER 7

102 THINGS TO DO THIS SUMMER

Ideas to get started

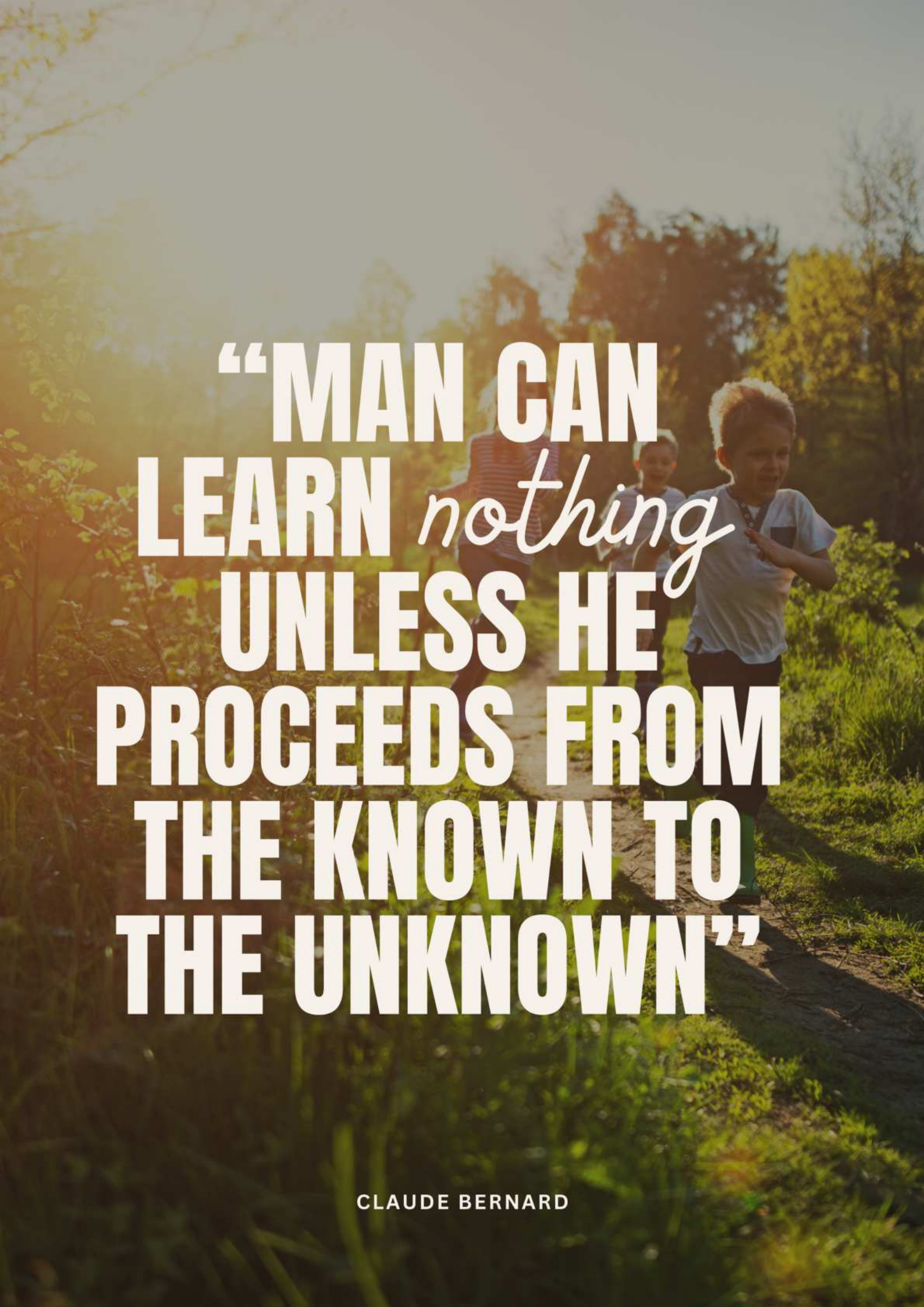
Summer learning is all about doing... sometimes the challenge is just having enough ideas to keep things fun and interesting! We've tried to help you as much as possible with practical easy to accomplish tips and ideas for summer learning fun.

The team of homeschool moms at Homeschool.com got together and worked on this rather comprehensive list of ideas to help just start your summer planning.

To get you started right away, here is a list of 101 fun and educational things to do this summer. Kids can choose any activities they are interested in and complete them in any order they'd like. The list includes checkboxes so your child can check them off as your family works through them!

Tips for this chapter:

Print the checklist and use it as you plan your summer filled with discovery!

A photograph of three children walking along a dirt path in a sunlit forest. The child in the foreground is a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a white t-shirt and dark pants, looking towards the camera. Behind her are two other children, one in a striped shirt and another in a white shirt. The path is surrounded by lush green foliage and trees, with sunlight filtering through the leaves, creating a warm, golden glow. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**“MAN CAN
LEARN *nothing*
UNLESS HE
PROCEEDS FROM
THE KNOWN TO
THE UNKNOWN”**

CLAUDE BERNARD

101 THINGS TO DO THIS SUMMER

~part one

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ☐ | Make Your Own Bucket List | ☐ | Learn About <u>Cotton Candy</u> |
| ☐ | <u>Learn About the Sun</u> | ☐ | Have a <u>Bubble Blowing Contest</u> |
| ☐ | Redecorate & Rearrange Your Room | ☐ | Learn to <u>Hula Hoop</u> |
| ☐ | Make a <u>Bandana Pillow</u> or 2! | ☐ | Try foods you've never tasted! |
| ☐ | Star Gaze <u>and use this app!</u> | ☐ | Try cooking new foods! |
| ☐ | Learn More <u>About the Moon</u> | ☐ | Learn about <u>bats!</u> |
| ☐ | Decorate some flip flops! | ☐ | Build several <u>bat houses!</u> |
| ☐ | Carve a <u>watermelon</u> with your parents! | ☐ | Plan a summer party! |
| ☐ | Try a <u>watermelon experiment</u> | ☐ | Make a <u>pinata!</u> |
| ☐ | Make <u>your own chalk</u> then... | ☐ | Try a <u>water pinata!</u> |
| ☐ | Create a driveway masterpiece | ☐ | Learn how to <u>swim better!</u> |
| ☐ | Old fashioned slip-n-slide! | ☐ | Learn how to do a <u>cartwheel!</u> |
| ☐ | Watch Classic Movies: 7 Brides for 7 Brothers, West Side Story, etc. | ☐ | Make a <u>kaleidoscope</u> |

101 THINGS TO DO THIS SUMMER

~part two

☐	Make a Smash Book	☐	Have a paper Airplane contest
☐	Write a Letter to a Pen Pal	☐	<u>Watch 30 best movies on Netflix</u>
☐	Write a Poem	☐	Learn how to sew
☐	Cut up a greeting card for a puzzle	☐	Watch a ballet
☐	Learn a musical instrument	☐	Learn to Play Chess
☐	Get creative - make art!	☐	Use CourseBridge to Get Ahead This Summer
☐	Learn a foreign language	☐	Have a picnic
☐	Celebrate Christmas in July	☐	Sketch a picture of your house from the outside
☐	Invent Your Own Board Game	☐	Build a fairy garden
☐	<u>Fun Free At Home Activities</u>	☐	Take a boat ride
☐	Invent your own board game	☐	Hold your own soccer camp
☐	Build a time capsule	☐	Find 10 different flowers
☐	Connect with Grandparents	☐	Make an obstacle course

101 THINGS TO DO THIS SUMMER

~part three

☐	Build a tree house	☐	<u>Use a Reading Challenge</u>
☐	Learn a new sport	☐	Become a photographer
☐	Make a lemonade stand in your neighborhood	☐	Invent a new dance
☐	Make your own bubble solution	☐	Make a scavenger hunt
☐	Plant something	☐	Find ways to use recycled materials
☐	Fly a kite	☐	Make a movie
☐	Take a dog for a walk	☐	Create a terrarium
☐	Learn some new outdoor games to play	☐	Make a fire safety paln
☐	Jump on a trampoline	☐	Act in a play
☐	Go swimming	☐	Make a bird feeder
☐	Roast marshmallows	☐	Write a song
☐	Watch the birds	☐	Tie dye some t shirts
☐	Make homemade ice cream	☐	Go without TV for more than a day!

101 THINGS TO DO THIS SUMMER

~part four

☐	Paint a portrait of your friend	☐	Adopt a pet
☐	Do a science experiment	☐	Use a compass or GPS map
☐	Write a fairy tale	☐	Visit a farm
☐	Arrange a bouquet	☐	Go canoeing
☐	Keep your brain going with teasers	☐	Build a sandcastle
☐	Paint and hide rocks	☐	Donate some toys
☐	Make dinner for your family	☐	Learn emergency first aid
☐	Make a new kind of sandwich	☐	Visit a National Park
☐	Cook a meal from another culture	☐	Create your own website
☐	Make some popsicles	☐	Research your family tree
☐	Have a taste test	☐	Become a paleontologist
☐	Join the workforce	☐	Travel in Time with a good book
☐	Help an elderly person with house or yard work	☐	Go berry picking

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Enjoy the process



CHAPTER 8

SUMMER LEARNING TIPS

Ideas to get started

Many parents have told us, “This all sounds lovely, but we just can’t put this into practice.”

We understand life can be busy, chaotic, and even stressful. This is why we’ve compiled a section of tips for summer learning which also apply to homeschooling during the year as well.

These tips include:

- Balancing Work and Learning at Home
- Learning at Home with Large Families
- Learning at Home with Children Who Have Special Needs
- Learning at Home While Travelling

Tips for this chapter:

Discover practical tips for this summer and for homeschooling in the future!



“Learn to enjoy every minute of your life. Be happy now. Don’t wait for something outside of yourself to make you happy in the future. Think how really precious is the time you have to spend, whether it’s at work or with your family. Every minute should be enjoyed and savored” - Earl Nightingale



BALANCING WORK & SUMMER LEARNING

Juggling family needs with workplace responsibilities is never easy. Just when you think you have the hang of it, summer vacation shifts everything.

Faced with the pressure to find safe, affordable childcare, it is easy to overlook the elements of summer vacation we want most for our kids—fun, opportunities for growth and discovery, new experiences and good times with friends. When we forget these details, arranging summer vacation becomes just another “have to” on our list instead of an opportunity to provide enrichment, meaningful learning and fabulous fun for our kids.

Reframe the ways you consider summer planning. Think about how you approach this task. Breathe, relax and forget about feeling frantic. Put yourself in your child’s shoes and imagine the summer he wants. Have fun with this process and be energized by this season’s magnificent possibilities instead of overwhelmed by perceived inconveniences. Tackle the logistics first:

- Eliminate unnecessary stress by making summer learning plans early.
- Look at your work schedule. How many hours will your family need childcare?
- Determine the hours someone is available to transport your child to activities and keep this information in a handy spot where everyone can see. This facilitates smoother planning all summer long.
- Take a hard look at your budget. How much money can you spend on summer enrichment programs, camps and childcare? Check with your accountant or go to the IRS website. You might find you have more resources to work with than you thought.

If your employer offers Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts, you can set aside \$2,500 (\$5,000 as a couple) to pay for eligible expenses related to caring for your child while you work. If your employer does not offer a flexible spending account, take advantage of the dependent care tax credit, which you can apply to summer programs in lieu of daycare.

WAYS TO ALLOW TIME FOR BOTH

“Now for the fun part: it’s time to think big! You may not be home with your child this summer, but that doesn’t mean you can’t influence their summer learning plan in wonderful ways.

Consider these options:

- What does your family’s ideal summer look like? Don’t just guess the answer to this question—ask your kids!
- What is your child excited about right now? Seek out programs online and in your community that support these interests.
- Make a list of things you and your child want to do together and hang it somewhere you can see every day. Tend to this list; check on it every chance you get and make these wishes come true.
- Enjoy the magic found in the early hours of the day and in the evening time as well. Make a plan for this part of the day and stick with it. Give your child chances to lead discussions with you. Play board games, do crafts, read stories, listen to music, drink tea together, exercise, cook dinner or go on a walk and discuss the day. Since time together is limited, avoid passive activities; make the most of these hours engaged in activities in which both of you talk, laugh and grow.
- Structured activities and time with peers can be great fun for kids. However, like adults, children need a chance to refuel from their activities. If your child’s weekdays are highly structured with camps and play dates, consider planning low-key weekends.
- Giving your child a chance to structure and manage his time fuels creativity and fosters independence.
- Chances are good that plenty of parents in your circle of friends are facing the same childcare issues. Help each other! Schedule play dates in your home and in theirs.
- Keep things positive. Accept and embrace the slower rhythms of summertime. When you are working and your schedule hasn’t changed much, it can be difficult to remember that your child’s days look and feel quite different right now.
- If your child prefers less structured time in a home-based setting, consider hiring an enthusiastic babysitter. Share your vision of summer learning with your sitter. Do some research and find community activities and fieldtrip opportunities that your child can enjoy with the babysitter. If possible, employ a local college student who shares similar interests as your child. For instance, if you have a budding young scientist, you can hire a biology major for the summer and ask her to share what she knows.
- If it is an option, bring your child to your workplace. This can be a meaningful experience and your child will remember it for years to come.

SUMMER LEARNING WITH LARGE FAMILIES

The expression “the more the merrier” rings especially true in the case of summer learning. If you have a large family, you probably watch your purse strings closely. It’s also likely you’ve already discovered there aren’t enough hours in the day to take each child to all of the activities he or she might like. Summertime can bring with it financial pressure and feelings of being stretched thin. Fortunately, knowing how to enjoy a good time is a prominent feature of many large families. Siblings might stage a theatrical production, play team sports or take on a major building project all while developing important cooperation and communication skills.

Most large families I spoke with agreed that keeping expectations realistic and households organized were key components of a successful summer learning plan. The ideas below will benefit any family who follows them, but they are especially helpful for large families managing multiple schedules and summer learning plans.

Before summer begins, gather everyone. Serve up a dish of something delicious and invite children to share their hopes for the summer ahead while you eat. It is important that everyone involved feels heard. To facilitate the conversation, you may want to prompt younger children with specific questions such as:

- What do you want to learn this summer?
- What do you want to see this summer?
- What do you want to try this summer?
- Whom do you want to see this summer?
- Whom do you want to help this summer?

Hang a family calendar in a central place the whole family can see. Having a clear sense of the week ahead helps older children make their plans for activities outside the home without much assistance. Use a colored marker to indicate the hours you are available to transport kids to miscellaneous events that arise during the week. This will keep everyone organized and it will help your children manage their expectations.



IDEAS FOR LARGE FAMILIES

- The family calendar will succeed best if everyone has a hand in maintaining it. Encourage your children to add notes when they see the need. Discuss calendar updates and changes at dinner to prepare for the following day of fun.
- Establish a routine. Children (especially little ones) respond well when they know what to expect. Keeping the routine fluid, fun, and flexible is important. It is still summer, after all!
- Limit activities. Remind everyone that quality—not quantity—matters most. Ask yourself and your family how much time is too much time to spend chauffeuring family members from one activity to another. The outcome of this discussion may be that younger children agree on one activity or decide to double up with a sibling to attend special programs. Older siblings with a license may want to assist with transportation.
- Large families are generally able to accommodate more kids easily. Be the place neighborhood children want to visit. This will minimize the time you spend in the car and will keep your children engaged in summer fun and learning.
- Meal preparation for large families takes time. Lighten your load by keeping meals simple and asking the kids for help. This is a great area to implement summer learning goals. If your young children aren't already helping with meals, summer is the perfect time for them to master some basic culinary skills.

To make this fun, create cooking challenges like who can come up with the best meal using only leftovers from the fridge. Older kids will enjoy specialty meals such as foreign cuisine or a particular style of baking. If you are lucky enough to have a child who wants to take charge of the garden, mealtime is a place where she can shine. Let her plan meals that highlight the food she is growing. Artistic kids have fun making centerpieces and arranging the table in new ways. Fun kitchen habits developed over the summer are likely to continue long after you put away the swimsuits and flip-flops for the season.

- At the beginning of summer, have your kids help you come up with an ambitious project idea that will appeal to a wide range of ages. Examples might be to build a tree fort, paint and redecorate the playroom, or establish new flower gardens. From the project's inception to its last finishing details, let the kids be in charge. An ambitious, home-based project can last the whole summer and will provide structure and amazing opportunities for learning. The outcome of a big family project is the immense satisfaction your kids will feel.
- Large families travel, too! Check out the website [Six Suitcase Travel](#), an online resource filled with cost-saving travel offers for large families.

A man with a beard and short hair, wearing a white t-shirt, is walking outdoors. He is looking down and to his left. A young boy with light brown hair, wearing a black and white striped t-shirt and khaki pants, is walking next to him. The background is a soft-focus view of trees and foliage, suggesting a park or a natural setting. The lighting is warm, possibly from the sun being low in the sky.

ADVICE FROM A LARGE FAMILY

Shared by Meana C. , New York

“I have 9 beautiful children from 15 years of age down to 7 months old. When looking for family activities, I look for things that cover a large age range and that don’t cost too much money. In large families, even a small entrance fee can add up to a sizeable cost.

One spot where we spend a lot of time during the summer is the local beach. Our community beach not only has no entrance fee; it also offers free lessons all summer. The youngest and oldest children play, read or socialize on the beach during lessons and then everyone goes for a swim afterward.

Another low-cost, highly educational and very fun activity is geocaching. For those not familiar with the term, there are boxes hidden all over the world with coordinates saved at a geocaching site. You can find the coordinates, reviews of the hike and difficulty ratings at the geocaching site. Then, you follow trails to find that hidden box full of little prizes. The geocacher will generally have a few little things along with him or her to trade, gift for gift. It is like a hike with a purpose. We’ve explored many local paths that we never would have known existed.

Rainy and hot days are perfect for a trip to the air-conditioned library. The kids happily spend hours there. Once we get home with a pile of favorite books, the older kids immerse themselves in their treasures while I read stories aloud to the younger kids.

ADVICE...

... *continued*

One major benefit of having a large family is that costly items that might not be worth it for a small family are more than worth it for a big one. For us, a trampoline that lasts many summers and entertains all ages is cheaper than a trip to an amusement park. A solid metal teeter-totter that spins can easily hold the teenage boys and is safe for the four- and six-year-olds as well.

Small or inexpensive items are great, too. A nice sand pile keeps little ones occupied for hours and inspires imagination as the older kids build cities or create huge moats and dams to see which will last the longest with water. We always have a supply of sidewalk chalk because it's great for art on hard surfaces as well as on the trampoline. My youngest daughter learned all her letters one summer as she practiced writing them on the big, black surface in the breezy shade.

In our family, summertime keeps us extra busy as we gather eggs, milk our cow, and bring in wood for the winter. A garden is a lovely idea, but since our thumbs are decidedly not green, we often trade for fruits and vegetables. Still, for many large families, a garden is not only a fun and educational project; the bounty reaped is well worth the time involved.

Honestly, the beauty of summer is that it doesn't have to be organized. Campfires and long walks cost nothing. A good book on a blanket under a tree is a perfect way to spend an afternoon. One of my children's favorite summertime activities is pretend sword fighting. In the last few years, this has evolved into full movies they recorded on digital cameras and then brought into the house for editing. This winter, all of my older kids are writing plays just to perform in the coming summer. Summer is my favorite time of the year. Although we don't do a whole lot of school, I feel like my kids experience learning that is more real when they get outside, socialize, and explore the world around them."



SUMMER LEARNING WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Planning summer learning for a special needs child comes with unique challenges along with so many opportunities for deep joy and learning. Much of the planning you do for your special needs child may resemble what you provide for your other children, but there will also be distinct differences and modifications along the way.

Many special needs students attend less school and receive fewer therapeutic hours during summer vacation. Developing a creative summer learning plan for your special needs child helps fill these gaps with meaningful learning opportunities and loads of fun!

If your child has special needs, you may often find yourself focusing on his challenges. This summer, focus on your child's *strengths*. Consider everything he has accomplished during the school year. Summer learning provides the opportunity to create extension activities that reinforce concepts he spent previous years mastering.

- While your child may enjoy time with family and engage in different activities, schedule changes can also be very challenging, depending on your child's circumstances. A month or so before the end of school, help prepare your child for the summer break by referencing it often in casual conversation.
- Ask your child to list the things she wants to see, do and learn. If these ideas are hard for your child to articulate, ask her to point to pictures in books and magazines. Cut out these images to make a collage and then hang your child's wish list so she can see it daily. Reference this list often and attempt to do as much as the summer will allow.
- Establish and maintain a routine. Your child is likely to respond better if he knows what to anticipate each day.
- Summer is a perfect time to reinforce skills your child has worked on already. If your child has been perfecting appropriate table manners, for example, let him celebrate his success at a fancy restaurant this summer. Perhaps this means walking to a neighbor's or doing a project in the community. Excellent opportunities for authentic learning and significant growth are limitless with the right approach.
- Seek out local families with special needs children. What sort of programs are they tapping into this summer? Some of these might be a fit for your child. Ask these parents if they are interested in weekly play dates as well.

SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCES

Books to Check Out

- *Life Skills Activities for Special Children, 2nd Edition* by Darlene Mannix
- *Social Skills Activities for Special Children, 2nd Edition* by Darlene Mannix
- *Life Skills Activities for Secondary Students with Special Needs, 2nd Edition* by Darlene Mannix
- *Social Skills Activities for Secondary Students with Special Needs, 2nd Edition* by Darlene Mannix
- *Connected Kids: Help Kids with Special Needs (and Autism) SHINE with Mindful, Heartfelt Activities* by Lorraine E Murray
- *Making Art Special: A Curriculum for Special Education Art, 2nd Edition* by Helen Goren Shafton

Online Resources

- The [Federation for Children with Special Needs](#) is a great resource.
- [SpecialNeeds.com](#) is a great overall resource for anyone parenting a special needs child.
- [Summer Activities for Children with Special Needs](#)





FAMILIES WHO TRAVEL

Whether you have your passport and airline tickets ready or your plan is to stay close to home, summer learning is the perfect opportunity to expand your child's understanding of the world. It is a fabulous chance to cultivate new friendships with people from around the world and to consider our own place in the world from a brand new perspective.

For many families, summertime means long road trips and adventures in new places. Summer travel provides tremendous opportunities for summer learning, but it's not without its challenges. Most seasoned travelers agree that being well organized and prepared means more fun for everyone.

Holly Warren's family of five recently embarked on several months of travel throughout the United States. She describes traveling by car with her husband and daughters (ages 11, 9, and 5) as an "eye-opening adventure!"

HOW DO YOU AVOID FATIGUE AND BURNOUT?

Shared by Holly Warren

This is one of the hardest parts of traveling! You want to go out, explore, and maximize every second of your family's travel time. After all, you may never return to the same place and that may be your only vacation for the year. Ironically, more activities do not always equal more fun and everyone needs downtime—especially kids.

We try not to plan more than one or two major stops on any given day. Oh, we still go to museums, aquariums and zoos. However, we're just as likely to spend the day exploring a nearby town (using the GPS to find a local playground) and finishing our day with an inexpensive meal like pizza. Doing research before heading out allows us to put together a simple daily plan that still includes the downtime kids need to rest, play, and process their adventures.

ROAD SCHOOLING

Some families “roadschool” yearlong and some only do it in the summer. The road becomes the classroom as you explore and grow together.

Think Colonial Williamsburg and the Grand Canyon. Would you rather read about them or would you rather experience them? Although roadschooling may seem strange or even impossible, many parents have taken the plunge!

I have done a lot of roadschooling with my kids. One time, we lived in New Zealand for three months and the kids were able to be exchange students. In the morning, my husband and I would walk the kids to school and drop them off and then walk back in the afternoon to pick them up. There was a Cadbury chocolate store right next to the school, which was very dangerous! After school, we would stop by the store and the kids would choose a new Cadbury treat to try. We didn’t gain any weight because of all the walking, but we did come home with cavities. Nonetheless, our New Zealand experience was wonderful; we met the nicest families and the kids had an incredible time.

Another time, we wanted to live in France for a month but the kids were in school so we needed to get their teachers’ permission. I convinced their teachers of the merits of roadschooling and promised that the kids would write a great report on everything they learned that month. We hired a French tutor and listened to audio tapes about famous French writers, artists and scientists. As a result, our experience visiting museums was much richer because we actually knew what we were viewing! If you have a passion for traveling, I encourage you to try roadschooling.

Resources for Roadschooing:

- www.Roadtripamerica.com
- <http://www.familiesontheroad.com>
- [Roadschooling Tips](#)

Another great resource is the book *Carschooling* by Diane Flynn Keith. She combines different products and ideas to create a “car curriculum” for language arts, math, social sciences, visual and performing arts, health and foreign language.



VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS

When wondering how to expose your child to other cultures and customs, do not feel constrained by tight finances or limited vacation time. With a computer, a library card or an imaginative adult, you don't have to leave your living room to transport your family to new places they will remember.

Connect exciting learning experiences to your virtual field trips! Visiting Japan for a virtual field trip? Then create some amazing Japanese crafts or cook Japanese food while listening to Japanese music!

Does a day at the Louvre sound like a dream come true but impossibly out of reach? Have you always wanted to visit the Grand Canyon but don't have the time to spare?

Sure, there's nothing like the real thing but in the meantime, spark your children's imagination with virtual field trips. They really will take you *anywhere*.

Visit museums or see important historical landmarks and iconic cultural sites at no cost with the help of the comprehensive sites listed below. Virtual field trips might become a regular part of your summer learning routine, so make this time special. Your child will want to help choose the destination, which can be an important and exciting part of the experience. Before you begin, find the place you are "visiting" on the map. Encourage older children to prepare some international cuisine to enjoy on their fieldtrip.

Resources:

- [Virtual Field Trips by Streamable](#)
- [We Are Teachers](#)
- [Discovery Education](#)

DREAMING OF SEEING THE PYRAMIDS?



EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Hosting an exchange student is an eye-opening experience for the whole family. Without ever leaving your home, you can have the chance to experience a new culture and develop meaningful relationships. It is also a wonderful opportunity to give visitors a different perspective of your home country. This can break down stereotypes and make the world just a little bit smaller in the process.

Families interested in hosting exchange students can choose to help in several different ways. You can provide a visitor a single meal or host a student in your home for a specific period such as a week, a semester or even one year.

The term “exchange student” can be confusing in that it seems to imply that the host and the visitor exchange visits in one another’s homes. This is not always the case. If your child is not able to travel at this time, this does not exclude him from the opportunity to host a visitor.

The word exchange refers to the interchange of cultural information and friendship.

THIS CAN BE A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE

Below, you’ll find resources to help you get started:

- The [Department of State](#) provides useful information and lists about sponsored exchange programs.
- *The Exchange Student Survival Kit* by Bettina Hansel
- *Host Family Survival Kit: A Guide for American Host Families* by Nancy King and Ken Huff

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Enjoy the process



CHAPTER 9

KIDS CHANGING THE WORLD

Ideas to get started

Shared by Rebecca Kochenderfer

War, global warming, racism, and poverty are just a handful of the challenges confronting 21st-century kids. Making sense of these issues isn't easy; conversations about these matters can be upsetting and overwhelming both to young people and to adults. Fortunately, kids have boundless energy, imagination and optimism and they really do want to change the world! Tapping into their special talents and passions is a way to empower our kids and to help them develop the skills they will need to address important issues of the day.

Summer provides space and time for kids to ask big questions. "What in this world needs fixing? Why are these things happening? How can I inspire change? How can I find other people who want to do the same thing as me?" Summer is an opportunity for families to go deep and to search for answers to these questions in places they've never looked before.

Tips for this chapter:

Show our children how they can effect a positive change in the world around them.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Our kids learn empathy and develop social consciousness the same way they learn most anything: from the adults in their lives modeling these behaviors and through hands-on, real life opportunities to practice these skills themselves.

Participating in volunteer activities when we are young makes us more sensitive to the needs of others. When opportunities arise, it is so important to give our children the chance to volunteer both in community projects and mission trips. The challenge comes for us as parents to be able to let them participate in these opportunities. We must do our “due diligence” as parents to make sure they are volunteering with a reputable organization. But then we can rest assured that they are learning and growing while volunteering.

This summer and throughout the year, share books with your young children about men and women who have inspired positive change. There are so many beautiful picture books to help children develop a basic understanding of environmental, peace, and social justice issues.

- *Me...Jane* by Patrick McDonnell
- *What Does Peace Feel Like?* by Vladimir Radunsky
- *The Harvey Milk Story* by Kari Krakow
- *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiui
- *The Tree Lady: The True Story of How One Tree-Loving Woman Changed a City Forever* by H. Joseph Hopkins
- *One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia* by Miranda Pau
- *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World* by Laurie Lawlor



**“EVERY INDIVIDUAL
MATTERS. EVERY
INDIVIDUAL HAS A ROLE
TO PLAY. EVERY
INDIVIDUAL MAKES A
DIFFERENCE.”**

- JANE GOODALL



IDEAS FOR SUMMER PROJECTS

- Conserve energy. Turn out all of the lights when you leave the room.
- Conserve water. Show your child a gallon-sized container and explain that leaving the water off while she brushes her teeth can save up to 25 gallons of water each month!
- Read *Composting: Nature's Recyclers* by Robin Koontz.
- Grow your own food.
- Visit your local animal shelter and give its residents some extra love.
- Use both sides of the paper for art projects.
- Identify an area in your neighborhood that needs a little extra care & commit
- Use reusable shopping bags.
- Plant trees together.
- Plant flowers for pollinators and read *What If There Were No Bees?: A Book About the Grassland Ecosystem* by Suzanne Slade. If that's a hit, you might consider keeping your own bees!

PROJECTS FOR OLDER KIDS

If your older child has an idea for a way to promote positive change, encourage them to be a change agent!

- Identify the problem and the goal.
- Develop an action plan to achieve the goal.
- Identify resources needed to implement the action plan.
- Find people willing to help.
- Launch the project.
- Share the project's outcomes with others and let them know how they can support future work of this kind.

Book Resources

- *The New 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth* by EarthWorks Group and Sophie Javna
- *The Teen Guide to Global Action: How to Connect with Others (Near & Far) to Create Social Change* by Barbara A. Lewis
- Mandy W., Texas



More Ideas **FOR CHANGING THE WORLD**



WRITE LETTERS TO OFFICIALS

If your child has concerns tell them to voice them by writing to government officials, magazine or newspaper editors.



VOLUNTEER FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Volunteering at animal shelters, women's shelters, soup kitchens, hospitals, libraries, and other offices of local politicians are great places to start.



AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

You're never too young to start an awareness campaign about a local issue or concern.



START A BLOG

blogs are a great way to share your thoughts and concerns while also learning technical skills and refining your abilities to write well!



CHAPTER 10

SUMMER CAMP POSSIBILITIES

learn &
grow

Shared by Rebecca Kochenderfer

For many, attending summer camp is a highly anticipated family tradition—and for good reason! Summer camp not only offers kids opportunities for emotional growth and physical and intellectual development; it's also loads of fun! Summer camp is summer learning at its best.

Last year, we sent our daughter to France with a teen trip travel company called Overland. Though expensive, it was a completely, amazing positive experience. She went on their “French language and hiking trip” and lived for three weeks in a *gite* on the Swiss border in Chamonix, France. Every day, they walked into town for three hours of language classes and then headed up in the Alps at lunchtime for a three to four hour hike. On the weekends, they took tents and backpacks and went to other locations in the surrounding area to camp.

The thing that I loved about Overland is their focus on small groups, self-sufficiency and teamwork among the groups they brought. There were 12 kids and 2 college-aged leaders in her group

Tips for this chapter:

Discover out of the box options for summer camp experiences.

**CAMP ISN'T A PLACE
YOU *visit*;
IT'S A PLACE THAT
BECOMES PART
OF *you!***

SUMMER CAMP IDEAS

They had to do their own meal planning, marketing, and cooking every day. They'd come to a consensus on what to make and eat for dinner, and then a team of three would do the shopping each evening. Another team would cook dinner, another team would prepare the next day's lunch and the last four would do the cleanup. I think she learned as much about working with new people as she did language and hiking.

From what I understand this is the format for all Overland trips. They also were cell phone and screen-free. My daughter received instructions not to bring any of that, and we complied. Therefore, we had no contact with her for three weeks. The trip leaders posted many pictures to their trip portal every Thursday, and we could peek at what they were doing.

I am a huge fan of these trips despite the high price tag. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. If money were no object I'd send a kid on one of these trips every year." - Maggie C., MA

Your children are likely to remember their summer camp experiences for many years to come. Memories of camp friendships, practical jokes, and outdoor adventures make great stories that your kids can share with their children someday.

When it comes to the many advantages of camp, fun in the sun and campfire sing-alongs are just the tip of the iceberg. A quality camp program offers children several advantages:

- Deep friendship. Fun-filled days spent working on common goals intensify relationships.
- Time in nature. Current research shows our kids aren't getting outdoors nearly enough.
- A chance to reinvent oneself. Camp is a liberating opportunity to be someone new and to shine as an artist, a comedic genius, or a regular nice guy.
- Unique learning opportunities. If you look in the right places, you'll find there is a summer camp program to match any interest.
- Exercise and fun physical activities.
- Independence. The independence, resilience, and personal growth camp inspires amazes both parents and kids. As these new skills blossom, your child's level of confidence rises as well.



CHOOSING A SUMMER CAMP THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

Day camp is often a more affordable option than sleep away camp and it is a great opportunity to give your kids the chance to dabble in a variety of different activities. More stimulating than daycare, a good day camp is also a perfect option for younger children who are not yet ready to sleep away from home.

DISCOVER DAY CAMPS AT MANY LOCALITIES

- Colleges and universities
- Religious organizations
- The YMCA
- Youth-service organizations and public agencies
- 4-H programs
- Girl and Boy Scouts

Overnight camp is a childhood rite of passage in some families. Most sleepaway camps offer programs for children as young as eight but some start with children younger than that. Kids follow their schedules and your child may be ready sooner (or later) than that. Is Your Child Ready?

- Determine your child's level of interest and investment in sleep away camp.
- Does your child have realistic expectations?
- Has your child enjoyed positive day camp experiences?
- Has your child had successful experiences sleeping overnight in the homes of friends and family?
- Does your child have the necessary practical skills to care for himself
- Be sensitive to your child's needs. Is your child an introvert or an extrovert?

RESOURCES FOR SUMMER CAMP

Once you and your child have a good sense of the experience he is hoping for, the fun begins! It's time to find a camp that will inspire, challenge, and empower your child in a wide range of wonderful ways. Start your research by interviewing friends and family who have had their own experiences with summer camp. This can be a great way to get objective reviews of camp programs worth considering.

The internet makes researching summer camp options easier than ever before. Try these comprehensive sites to help get started:

- The [American Camp Association's](#) site lists accredited camps organized by both zip code and areas of focus.
- [Salvation Army](#) summer camps website is a great resource.

Additional Resources

- *The Summer Camp Handbook: Everything You Need to Find, Choose and Get Ready for Overnight Camp—and Skip the Homesickness* by Christopher A. Thurber PhD
- *Summer Fun: The Parents' Complete Guide to Day Camps, Overnight Camps, Specialty Camps, and Teen Tours* by Marian Edelman Borden





QUESTIONS TO ASK THE CAMP

- Is the camp's staff communicative? Do they respond quickly to emails and phone calls? Do they appear helpful and happy to answer questions?
- What is the camp's philosophy? Does its mission statement resonate for you and for your child?
- Is there an obvious sense of community spirit and inclusion? If your child has quirks (and honestly, who doesn't?), will he feel welcomed and appreciated?
- What is the camp's history? Does it have a proven record of accomplishment?
- What percentage of its campers returns from year to year?
- Are there opportunities for leadership and growth?

- Are the camp's activities engaging, experiential, and full of opportunities for hands-on learning?
- Does the staff appear to be well trained and enthusiastic? What is the camper-to-counselor ratio?
- How structured is the program? Will the level of structure suit the needs of your child? If your child desires it, will he have free time to pursue independent projects or to take a quiet walk in the woods?
- Is there a comprehensive communication plan between the camp and parents in the event of an emergency?
- Does the American Camp Association (ACA) accredit the camp?



PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR CAMP

summer learning isn't just for the kids; parents learn many things as well during this season. The thought of being away from our children for an extended period can bring out anxiety, which is understandable. Overnight camp is a significant milestone. It's a huge reminder that we are preparing our children to leave the nest, to spread their wings and to fly.

Believe me, I know how scary that feels but it's important to sort out these feelings with a partner or good friend—not your child. Our kids can often tune in to how we are feeling. Any ambivalence or anxiety expressed in their direction is likely to influence their own emotions and feelings toward going to summer camp.

As is the case in so many instances in life, being well prepared will make your child's time at camp go more smoothly. Prior to camp, try the following:

- Process with your child any fears or concerns he may be feeling about camp. Discuss worse case scenarios and talk about their solutions.

- Be honest. Acknowledge that your child might feel pangs of homesickness at camp and that this is a normal part of growing up.
- Practice sleeping in a tent away from home.
- Work on independence skills such as grooming, taking care of one's things properly, and asking for help when necessary. Consider giving your child more freedom as the time for camp grows nearer.
- Have relatives or family friends over for a meal and invite them to share their own positive camp stories.
- For young children, picture books about camp can be extremely helpful in addressing any apprehension they are experiencing.

Resources

- *Lights Out!: Kids Talk About Summer Camp* by Eric Arnold and Jeff Loeb
- *The Berenstain Bears Go to Camp* by Stan and Jan Berenstain
- *Tacky Goes to Camp* by Helen Lester
- *Froggy Goes to Camp* by Jonathan London
- *Postcards from Camp* by Simms Taback

TIPS FOR AFFORDING SUMMER CAMP

Summer camp is a beloved summer tradition in many families, but it can also be a huge financial stretch. When considering how to finance this opportunity, it's important to think outside the box.

- Around the holidays when relatives ask for gift-giving ideas, suggest donations to the summer camp fund. Most people will love the chance to help make camp happen. If they aren't comfortable giving money, a new sleeping bag, flashlight and other camp supplies will help offset costs.
- Plan ahead and take advantage of early registration discounts.
- Each month, put a small bit of savings aside for camp fees. You'll be surprised how quickly it adds up!
- Seek out programs that offer scholarships and financial aid.
- Take advantage of multi-children discounts because most camps have them.
- If your child is under 13, you may be able to use pre-tax dollars in a dependent care flexible spending plan.

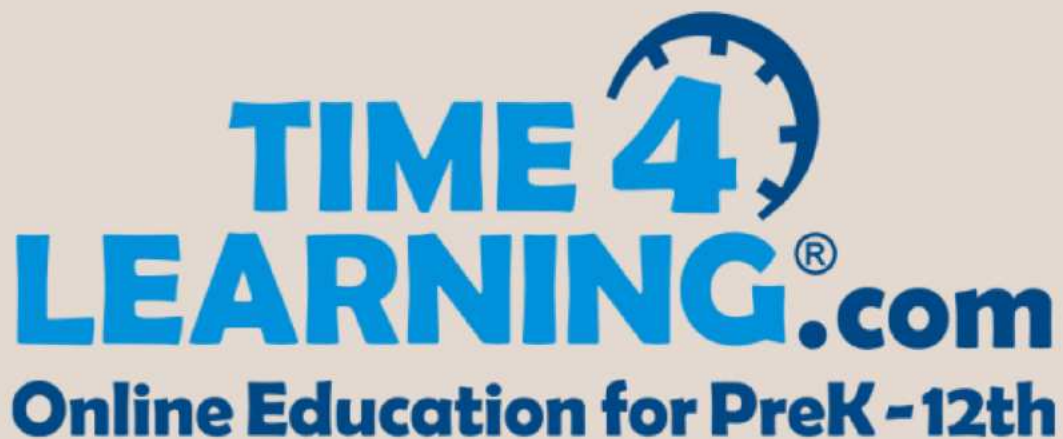
- When tax time comes around, look into using the Child and Dependent Care Credit. Taxpayers are able to deduct up to 35% of their childcare expenses.
- Day camps offer all kinds of summer programming and are generally much more affordable than sleep-away camps.
- Offer to volunteer your time to offset some costs.
- Consider choosing a free camp. Some are merit-based while others go by family income. Two outstanding programs worth looking into include the following:
 - ASM International Materials Camp at Drexel University is a one-week free camp for high school juniors and seniors to introduce them to materials science and engineering.
 - The Williams College Math Camp (WCMC) is a free, nine-day residential math camp for about 20 mathematically gifted high school students who have completed or are currently enrolled in Algebra 2 or its equivalent.

The best part of summer learning, both for children and their parents, is the chance to try new things and to use completely unorthodox methods if we choose. If the right summer program isn't leaping out at you, start your own!

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Enjoy the process

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