

Summer Activity Ideas for Parents

Outdoor Activities

Exercise:

- Go on a hike:
 - Look for different species of plants or animals
 - Find your average speed
 - Track heart rate/breathing

- Number Line Run (Math Game):
 - Draw a number line with chalk on your driveway/sidewalk (make sure you leave a gap of about 1 foot between numbers).

 - For the younger kids, have them walk across the number line as they count off the numbers. Once they get bored, practice number-recognition by yelling out numbers and having them run to the number on the line (great way to practice the tricky teens!).

 - Depending on ages, you can practice addition/subtraction or multiplication/division using the number line. The idea is obviously to make it a game, with kids seeing the challenge as fun versus a math review.

- Create a Backyard (Frontyard, Courtyard) Obstacle Course using things you have around the house such as hula hoops, jump ropes, sticks, stones, empty milk jugs, balloons or just about anything. This [YouTube video](#) demonstrates exactly how to set up an Obstacle Course at your home. [This article](#) also gives some ideas for both indoor and outdoor low prep obstacle courses.
 - Practice timing each other and compare times. See how far you can get in 1 min, 2 min, etc and see if you can get farther on your next try.
 - Later, have your child recall the sequence of the obstacle course and write the steps down using transition words such as First, Next, Then, Last.
 - Older children can be challenged to create and design their own Obstacle Course on paper, digitally or in a 3-D fashion, for example with clay.

Art/Nature:

- Do a fun ART PROJECT out of natural objects from your backyard or park. Incorporate some math by making sure the art project is made of $\frac{1}{4}$ leaves or $\frac{1}{2}$ green items.

- Make a Bird Feeder with household items. [This article](#) shows step by step illustrations on how to construct a bird feeder out of a milk carton. [This video](#) demonstrates how to make a bird feeder out of a water bottle.
 - Watch the birds that visit your bird feeder and sketch them in a notebook.
 - Research the birds that you find visiting your bird feeder.
 - Conduct a [Bird Beak Experiment](#) to discover how beaks are specialized tools that determine what birds are able to eat.
 - Go on a [Bird Survey](#) to discover the birds indigenous to your area. Each year in February, the Audubon Society conducts a [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) where people from around the world come together to watch, learn about, count and celebrate birds. Consider saving your information from your bird survey and participating in the Bird Count next February.

Science: Take a Daily Walk

- Think like a biologist: do some population studies.
 - Go on a Bird Watch
 - Take a notebook and a pencil with you on your daily walk.
 - Map your course in your notebook.
 - On your map, mark spots where you saw a bird and describe the type of bird you saw (you can use words or draw a picture).
 - Make a table of the different birds you see and keep track of the number of each kind of bird you see.
 - You can also use an app like the Audubon Society App to find out what type of bird you are looking at..
 - Help keep invasive species from spreading:
 - Volunteer to help remove invasive species at your local wildlife area.
 - [The Nature Conservancy Upcoming Events](#)
 - Or, just help your elderly neighbor remove some pesky weeds from their flower bed. (Weeds are invasive species to lawns and flowerbeds).
- Think like a Meteorologist: Study some weather patterns.
 - Study the weather
 - Check out the tools you can make from common household items: [Exploratorium Snacks](#)
 - Check out some information about the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association
 - Then, go out and observe the atmosphere for yourself.
 - On your daily walks, document the wind direction and relative speed (fast, slow, none, etc) at specific points on your walk.
 - Document the amount and types of clouds you see.
 - Document the direction the clouds are moving or which direction you see the most clouds forming.
 - Document the temperature at the start and end of your walk.
 - Document the amount of sun, and its location in the sky.
- Think like a Physicist: Study the light on your walk
 - Documenting your shadow each day could tell you about the direction the light is coming at you. It can help you tell what time of day and what month of the year we are in.
 - You can study how light reaches different parts of your yard by creating solar cookers and seeing what part of your yard works the best at different times of day. Then you could use this pattern to decide how to most efficiently water your yard. Remember, you want the water to have a chance to soak into the roots before it evaporates.
 - Conduct evaporation studies in your backyard. How long does it take for different solutions to evaporate? Where does the solution go when it evaporates?
 - Can you make fresh water out of salt water? Try an evaporation experiment to find out!
 - Research how rainbows are made. Where do all the colors come from? Use different containers and water to see if you can make a rainbow in your backyard.
 - If it is a really hot day, try the sprinklers in your yard. See if you can find the rainbows in your backyard.
 - Can you find the end of the rainbow?

Indoor Activities

Reading:

- [Read a book then watch the movie](#), then discuss:
 - What did the movie change?
 - What did the movie leave out or add?
 - Which characters were true to the author's description?
 - Was the setting what you imagined? Why or why not?
 - Are you glad you saw the movie or do you wish you skipped it?

Math:

- Teach kids to cook with the step-by-step lessons and recipes at [Cooking With Kids \(http://www.childrensrecipes.com/\)](http://www.childrensrecipes.com/). The site also includes measurement reminders, safety tips, and suggestions for involving kids in the cooking process.
- Plan a vacation - [Scholastic: Budgeting for a Trip](#)

Drawing/Writing:

- Staple together pieces of plain paper or use a notebook to help your child make a cartoon [flip book](#). Kids draw a sequence of cartoons and simulate motion as they "flip" through the pages. (Note that the first image in the series should be at the bottom of the stack of pages, and the illustrations should progress from bottom to top.) [How to Draw Cartoons](#) offer simple instructions for drawing cartoon figures.

Technology:

- Coding
 - [Hour of Code](#)
 - [Scratch](#)

Interior Decorating/Design:

- Invite your child to devote some thought to ways to improve his or her bedroom/living space. Explore with your child [Kids' Room Decorating Ideas](#) to find ways your child might individualize his or her room. Then have the child draw the layout of their "new" room. The following questions might guide kids as they consider the possibilities:
 - Other than sleeping, what do you do most often in your room? Play games? Work on a computer? Listen to music? Do homework? Entertain guests?
 - What furniture or other items do you use most often? What do you use least often?
 - What kind of storage do you need? A dresser? A bookcase? A clothes hamper? A desk?
 - What do you like best about your room? What do you like least?

Building/Engineering:

- Become an ENGINEER! This is a great way to encourage problem solving and creative thinking, all while having fun!
 - ❑ Become a [Pasta Engineer](#) using different shapes and colors of pasta along with playdough. Older children can become inspired with [this video](#) of Dyson engineers who built replicas of the Golden Gate Bridge out of pasta!
 - ❑ Explore basic engineering concepts and have a snack while becoming a [Marshmallow Engineer](#). Older children can be challenged to create multi-story structures. They can also be encouraged to build structures strong enough to hold the weight of different objects.
 - ❑ Explore the idea of [Automotive Engineering](#) by creating a balloon-powered car. Experiment with different materials to make the cars go faster.

- Lego Genius Game--Kids love Legos, and they can provide hours of entertainment. You can use these Legos to encourage creativity and answer thought provoking questions in the following game:
 1. Ask your child ONE of the following questions:
 - ★ What is your future going to be?
 - ★ What is ONE thing you want to accomplish in your life?
 - ★ What is your biggest fear right now?
 - ★ What do you want to do when you grow up?
 - ★ What is the most important question you have?
 2. After your child thinks about their answer, have them use their Legos, including base plates and figurines, to build a 3-D representation of their answer.
 3. Have your child present and explain their answer to you. This will encourage your child to have a voice to express their feelings, and also to find a way to physically represent their feelings.
 4. After a few repetitions, encourage your child to come up with their OWN questions. You can even answer THEIR questions with your own Lego representations!
 5. [The Lego website](#) provides online games and videos for children.

Looking for more ideas?

Check out this book: *Summer Activities for the Gifted Student: Grade ____* ([amazon.com](#)).
(There is one for every grade level.)