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How Can I Help My Child Avoid Summer Boredom?

Tom Lee

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ask A Specialist

A weekly question/answer column

How Can I Help My Child Avoid Summer Boredom?

Tom Lee answers:*

Summer offers a great time for children to play and explore at their own pace. But it can also turn into sitting and watching too much TV, or hearing the all-too-familiar, "What can I do? I'm bored." Though each child's needs are different, here are a few ideas for summer planning.

- **Routine.** As much as children want to be free of bedtimes and the deadlines of school, they need to have a routine. Having even just one scheduled event in the day gives them a reference point to work around. It is also a good idea to involve children in deciding the summer rules for chores, mealtimes, and bedtimes.
- **Lessons.** Though being involved in structured lessons, teams, or camps can work for some children, for others, being involved in community recreation, scouts or 4-H can be a good way to help them explore their talents and interests. Whatever you decide, make sure children have plenty of unstructured time to lie on the grass and look at the clouds. Too many commitments can be stressful for both your children and you.
- **Reading.** Include some reading in your plans for summer. Children who read several books over the summer return to school ready to pick up where they left off in the spring. Set some goals, read together, visit the library, or buy a few paperback editions of age-appropriate children's books.
- **Jobs.** Help children who want to start earning extra money find possibilities. They can help a neighbor with a home office stuff envelopes, or they can babysit, do yard care or other odd jobs for neighbors. Taking the lemonade stand one step further, children may find some other product or service to market on a regular basis.
- **Family activities.** When students or adults are asked to recall happy experiences in their family, they often mention vacations and family trips. Those few days can create lasting memories and strengthen family ties. Involve children in the planning and preparations and scrap-book making. Make a vacation an investment in your family.
- **Be available.** Remember, you are your children's best resource. Often, if you help them get something started, they will take it from there.

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* Tom Lee is Utah State University Extension Family and Human Development Specialist