

# 31 Ways to Have Summer Fun

*When the excitement of getting out of school has faded, their friends are away, or the weather is uncomfortable, you may need a little help thinking of how to keep kids happy and busy. Here is a month-full of ideas for impossibly hot afternoons, rainy mornings or lonely days when children are apt to moan, "We're bored." Many of these activities work well (in fact, better!) with a grandparent or other older relative. Some are ideal for one-on-one adult-child time. Others can involve the entire family.*

**1. Flop on your backs** in the yard and watch the clouds. Do it after dark and you can watch the stars.

**2. Flop on your tummies** on the ground and watch the bugs.

**3. Fly a kite.** To build one from scratch, start at the PBS web site for tips on how to create a Ben Franklin-style kite: [www.pbs.org/benfranklin/exp\\_kite.html](http://www.pbs.org/benfranklin/exp_kite.html). Or visit your library (online or bricks-and-mortar) for a how-to book.

**4. Walk to the water and skip rocks.** Finding the perfect flat rock for skipping is part of the fun, and then you'll want to see whose rock can bounce the most times on the water's surface.

**5. Visit your local historical museum** or landmark house. Your kids may be fascinated by the crank telephone, the wood cookstove, the Atwater-Kent radio and the photographs of downtown as it used to be.

**6. Read old papers and magazines.** Some are online, others are on microfilm or in the historic documents rooms of large public or college libraries. You'll find articles about people you've known only as the names of buildings and parks, and quaintly written ads for products that still exist.

**7. Create a quiz "show."** Gather up flash cards, the "Word Power" pages from Reader's Digest issues and even old SAT prep books to see what questions stump which child. (Wendy Reid Crisp, writing in *Grand* magazine, said she always has "prizes" on hand for her quiz winners: orphaned earrings, old napkin rings, hotel shampoos and soaps, decks of cards, and cosmetic samples.)



**8. Quiz on the run.** Or more accurately, when you're waiting for someone or stuck in traffic. That's a great time to pull a box of questions from an old Trivial Pursuit game out of the glove box and see how many questions your carload can answer before you're free to go.

**9. Quilt with paper or cloth.** Cut strips, squares and triangles from scraps of wrapping paper, catalogs and the insides of envelopes to paste down quilt patterns on a cardboard base. Turn old scarves, hankies, hand towels and worn out jeans into squares to stitch together on a machine or by hand. In a day's time the doll bed will have a new coverlet, the treehouse will have a new curtain or you'll have a runner for your kitchen table.

**10. Polish the pots, the pans and Great-Aunt Pearl's silver pitcher.** Take the copper pots outside to scour with cleanser and the hose, and use silver polish and a soft cloth on the silver at the sink. Kids can "draw" a face in the tarnish or "write" their initials while they're polishing.

**11. Paint!** Even a three-legged chair, a discarded trellis, or a dead branch from a tree will make garden art if your kids splash it with color. Go pink, go purple, go periwinkle—or paint each part of the chair a different color.

**12. Go sample samples** at the supermarket. Fridays and Saturdays are the days when stores more often offer samples.

**13. Go sample** fruits, honey and homemade cheese at a farmers' market.

**14. Get goofy:** sing silly songs and tell silly jokes around the dinner table or at a backyard show for family and neighbors.

**15. Play doctor.** Set up a hospital for the teddy bears and dolls, carry them in on stretchers and bandage their wounds. Or practice the Heimlich maneuver on each other.

**16. "Tie-dye"** by dripping food coloring or water color paint on coffee filters or tissue paper. Try the new "neon" food colors and "glitter" water colors.

**17. Do a crossword puzzle together.** ‘Tweens and teens will probably get the pop culture clues, while they’ll need Mom and Dad (and maybe the grandparents) for names of ‘60s hits and iconic muscle cars.

**18. Create your own crossword puzzle** with family-specific clues: Dad’s first dog, Mom’s hometown, the kids’ preschool teacher, where you vacationed in 2005...

**19. Press leaves and flowers** between sheets of white paper and under your heaviest dictionary or phone book. Glue the dried leaves and blossoms to stiff paper for a picture or to note cards.

**20. Get goofy for the camera.** Let each child photograph everyone else as they look through an empty picture frame, try on Groucho Marx glasses or hang upside down. Put the photos together in a card to send someone, in an album to keep yourself or to e-mail a friend as a screensaver.

**21. Go Fish.** Or play rummy or cribbage or Old Maid.

**22. Go dancing!** Turn on the music you loved when you were 16, and get everyone on their feet to wriggle and whirl for at least 10 minutes. Or start a conga line and dance your way down the sidewalk, adding neighbors as you go. Guaranteed to change everyone’s mood!

**23. Make soapy water.** Give a preschooler the eggbeater, a bucket of water and a couple of tablespoons of dish detergent and wait for a bucket of bubbles. Bottle up the suds in a sprayer bottle and squirt the aphids on your roses.

**24. Make magic!** Start with the free instructions for card tricks at [www.blifaloo.com/magic/card\\_tricks.php](http://www.blifaloo.com/magic/card_tricks.php).

**25. Make marshmallows.** Ideal for kids who can use the stove, this project requires a candy thermometer. See the detailed and carefully illustrated instructions at [www.wikihow.com/Make-Marshmallows](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Marshmallows).

**26. Make s’mores!** Toast those homemade marshmallows and combine them with squares of chocolate and graham crackers for the traditional camp fire treat.

**27. Make a cake—in a cardboard oven!** Ask any Boy Scout, Girl Scout or Camp Fire member: there are lots of ways to cook in a box. You’ll find several ideas at [www.astoriatroop105.us/BoxOven.pdf](http://www.astoriatroop105.us/BoxOven.pdf), which explains how to use charcoal briquettes and a wood fire.



**28. Cut out paper dolls** and give them clothes and hair or make a chain of paper monsters or spiders or cars or horses or...

**29. Ride the rails.** Take a “real” train ride ([www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) lists routes that serve your area) or climb on a vintage steam engine that choo-choos on tourist tracks. ([Www.touristrailways.com](http://www.touristrailways.com) lists dozens, from Alabama’s Heart of Dixie to Hawaii’s Sugar Cane Train.)

**30. Peer at the planes.** Find a parking place near an airport and watch the Cessnas or the super-jets take off and land. In some airports you don’t have to clear security to be able to sit at windows and watch.

**31. Fill a time capsule** with examples of what you want people to know about 2009 in 10, 20 or 30 years. Maybe pictures of yourselves, a grocery store receipt that shows prices, the cover of yesterday’s newspaper...? Pack it in a coffee can and bury it in your backyard or hide it in the attic.

### Other Resources

*News for Parents*, issued each month by Parenting Press, is a complimentary electronic newsletter that describes family activities, craft and community service ideas, special events and travel. Available online or by e-mail subscription; see [www.ParentingPress.com/ezine.html](http://www.ParentingPress.com/ezine.html).

*Kids to the Rescue: First Aid Techniques for Kids*, written by Maribeth and Darwin Boelts, is Parenting Press’s well-illustrated how-to book on handling emergencies. At your bookstore or [www.ParentingPress.com](http://www.ParentingPress.com).

A concise guide to showing children how to administer first aid is available as another Qwik Sheet, *Teaching Your Kids First Aid*, available at [www.ParentingPress.com/qwik-sheets.html](http://www.ParentingPress.com/qwik-sheets.html).

Supporting both publications is *First Aid—Even for First Graders: Teaching Tips for the Classroom*, created by Maribeth Boelts and Linda Carlson. Describes dozens of ways you can introduce kids to emergency situations, emergency personnel and first aid techniques. Free at [www.ParentingPress.com/activities.html](http://www.ParentingPress.com/activities.html).

*What About Me? 12 Ways to Get Your Parents’ Attention (Without Hitting Your Sister)*, written by Eileen Kennedy-Moore and illustrated by Mits Katayama, shows a dozen helpful or fun activities for children. Available in your bookstore or at [www.ParentingPress.com](http://www.ParentingPress.com).