



ENHANCING SUMMER ACTIVITIES May 2009

For some kids, the approach of summer brings with it thoughts of sleeping in, relaxing, not having to do homework and generally slowing down. That could be the same for many adults, but often, parents are faced with finding activities for their children to occupy their time and chauffeuring their children to even more activities than during the school year! Most parents are also looking for opportunities to keep their children's brains active.

There are many summer activities involving children that can also become learning opportunities without the child even knowing it!

Summer school may be a necessity for some students, but for many others, it can be an opportunity to take a class they are interested in but don't have time for during the school year. Some school districts offer enhancement courses, as well as required curriculum. Taking a summer school class that meets a graduation requirement may allow a student more time during the school year to pursue their interests in athletics, music, or drama or just provide more time for the demands of the courses they will be taking. It also helps to keep students involved in the learning environment so that returning to school in the fall isn't such a huge adjustment.

But summer school isn't for everyone! Planning "field trips" is a great way to help keep kids learning. Historic museums, art museums or centers, aquariums, zoos, nature treks and even baseball games all provide these opportunities.

Most public museums, zoos, etc. have websites. Visit the website before the excursion to look for:

- Maps
- Activity sheets
- Coloring pages
- Fact sheets
- A schedule of displays, exhibits, activities so you can plan your trip around those features
- Tips for visiting the facility with children

You can also use the website to determine which areas of the attraction are of most interest and to see if personal tours are available. This can avoid trying to see it all in one day or packing too much into a short time.

Visit your local library prior to your "adventure" and check out age-appropriate books that you and your child can study before the visit. This will help discover what the kids are interested in and give them a preview of what they might see or what they can look for.

You can make a list of things to look for and create a "scavenger hunt" during the trip. Kids can practice map-reading skills to get around the zoo or museum or compass use on a nature trail. Develop vocabulary by looking up challenging words or terms before or after the trip. Students can make their own notebooks or scrapbooks of what they saw on their venture, using old magazines or materials from the location or website. They will build on writing skills as they describe their trip to go along with the pictures. If cameras are allowed in the facility, provide a disposable camera for your youth to photograph their excursion.

EXAMPLES:

- In the zoo, have kids write down examples of: a warm-blooded animal, a cold-blooded animal, a bird, a reptile, a mammal, an insect, a vertebrate, an invertebrate, etc.
- In an art museum, purchase postcards of works of art and have the child find them on your walk through the museum.
- Take along a notebook and have the child sit and draw his/her impression of what they see.
- Make a list of items to find on a walk or on a nature trail.
- Learn how to fill out a baseball scorecard and keep track of the plays during the game.
- After the game, read the sports section story and box scores.

Check with your local/area parks and resources and destinations for vacations. There's lot to do and learn!

(Source: www2.scholastic.com)