



Wee Learn

Wee Mentors
(6+ years):
Is Your Child too Busy?



Wee Mentor (6+ years)- Is your child too busy?

There are so many options for extra curricular activities; some kids have too much to do and not enough time to do it. It's hard to tell if it's due to parents pushing or kids trying to keep up with their peers. Whatever the reason, one thing's for sure — something's got to give.

Why Are Kids So Busy? For some families, kids may be driving the schedule because they don't want to feel left out. Some parents feel it's more productive to keep their kids constantly occupied rather than leave free time for playing, exploring, and learning on their own. They might also feel that their kids will miss out on key experiences if they aren't doing what other kids are. But most parents usually just want what seems best for their kids. Even when intentions are good, though, kids can easily become overscheduled. The pressure to participate in a handful of activities all the time and to "keep up" can be physically and emotionally exhausting for parents and kids alike. Of course, organized activities and sports are beneficial, too. They foster social skills and are opportunities for play and exercise. They teach sportsmanship, self-discipline, and conflict resolution. Most of all, they're fun! The key is to keep them that way and ensure that kids — and parents — aren't overwhelmed.

Signs That Kids Are Too Busy. Sooner or later, kids who are too busy will begin to show signs. Every child is different, but overscheduled kids may:

- Feel tired, anxious, or depressed
- Complain of headaches and stomachs, which may be due to stress, missed meals, or lack of sleep
- Fall behind on their schoolwork, causing their grades to drop

Overscheduling can also take a toll on kids' friendships and social lives. Family life also can suffer — when one parent is driving to basketball practice and the other is carpooling to dance class, meals are missed. As a result, some families rarely eat dinner together, and may not take the extra time to stay connected. Plus, the weekly grind of driving kids all over the place and getting to one class, game, or practice after another can be downright tiresome and stressful for parents.





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Tips for Busy Families

Even those parents who try to help their kids cut back on some activities can run up against coaches who won't tolerate absences and kids who want to keep up with their friends. However, it's important for parents to step back and make sure that their kids aren't burning out.

The key is to schedule things in moderation and choose activities with a child's age, temperament, interests, and abilities in mind.

Depending on a kid's age and interests, it's possible to set reasonable limits on extracurricular activities and make them more enjoyable for all.

Here are some simple suggestions:

- **Agree on ground rules ahead of time:** For instance, plan on kids playing one sport per season or limit activities to two afternoons or evenings during the school week.
- **Know how much time is required:** For example, will there be time to practice between lessons? Does your child realize that soccer practice is twice a week, right after school until dinnertime? Then there's the weekly game, too. Will homework suffer?
- **Keep a calendar to stay organized:** Display it on the refrigerator or other prominent spot so that everybody can stay up-to-date. And if you find an empty space on the calendar, leave it alone!
- **Even if kids sign up for the season, let them miss one or two sessions:**
Sometimes taking the opportunity to hang out on a beautiful day is more important than going to one more activity, even if you've already paid for it.
- **Try to carpool with other parents to make life easier.**
- **Try to balance activities for all of your kids — and yourself:** It hardly seems fair to spend time and energy carting one kid to activities, leaving little time for another. And take time for yourself, to do the things you enjoy, and to spend time together as a family.





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- **Create family time:** If you're eating pizza on the run every night, plan a few dinners when everyone can be home at the same time — even if it means eating a little later. Schedule family fun time, too, whether it's playing a board game or going on bike ride or hike.
- **Set priorities:** School should come first. If kids have a hard time keeping up academically, they may need to drop an activity.
- **Know when to say no:** If your child is already doing a lot but *really* wants to take on another activity, discuss what other activity or activities need to be dropped to make room for the new one.
- **Remember the importance of downtime:** Everyone needs a chance to relax, reflect on the day, or just do nothing.

Slow It Down

Take a moment and think about your child's life. If it's hectic, sit down together and decide where you can cut back. If it's overly structured, set aside time for blowing off some steam. Riding a bike, taking a walk, playing a game, listening to music, or just doing nothing for a while can give kids some much-needed downtime. And never forget how important it is for kids to simply get together to play. Kids need time to just be kids.

<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/child-too-busy.html>



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