



Wee Learners(4 - 5 years): 12 Free or Low-Cost Summer Activities for Your Kids

Summer poses the inevitable question for many parents: **Now that the kids are home all day, what am I going to do with them?** Summer camps get expensive, as do visits to water parks, theme parks and other attractions. Kids just want to run and to have fun and be with their families. A picnic in the park with sandwiches and a game of Frisbee might not sound exciting to you, but for most kids, it's a big deal. Invite the kid's friends for a sleepover in the backyard or even in the living room. You don't need to spend a lot of money to host their friends for a sleepover. Traditional outdoor kids' games, such as kickball, softball and tag, are still considered fun, even if they've evolved a little. If kids don't want to be prided away from their electronic gadgets, make some rules, as to how long and how much your child can play with their electronic gadgets.

Here are some free or cheap things to do with the kids this summer:

Play traditional card games or board games. This is not old-fashioned, but retro. Board game nights and trivia nights are popular in restaurants. Your kids may love the games Sorry, Monopoly, and Snakes and Ladders.

See free or cheap kids' movies. Many movie theater chains show free or cheap kids' films on weekday mornings during the summer. Get there early if you want a seat. Many cities and regions have free outdoor film festivals, and your local library may also show kids' movies.

Go to a free concert in the park. Cities and towns nationwide put on free concerts in parks in the summer. That's a great way to introduce kids to music and live performance without having to worry about whether they'll squirm in their seats.

Let the kids help you cook. Not only does this sharpen math skills with school out, but also kids are more likely to eat healthy meals they help prepare.

Share a hobby or craft. Do you sew, scrapbook, collect coins? Share that skill with your child or grandchild. If the child has expressed interest in a topic you haven't mastered, do the research and create projects together.

Take up a sport or pastime as a family. Yoga, karate, bicycling and hiking are good sports for families to engage in together. The best part is you can stay fit and spend quality time with your family all at once.

Visit your City's free attractions. Smaller, less popular museums or attractions may seem cheesy to you, but they're magic to kids who have never seen them. An added plus is they often have much smaller admission fees than the most popular museums and zoos.

Take a field trip to a nearby town. Check with convention and visitors' bureaus for information about special summer events and deals, as well as free attractions.

Do outdoor movie night. Find a neighbor with a projector, put up a sheet and invite friends and neighbors over for a potluck movie night. Kids can watch the film under the stars while parents and grandparents visit, or vice versa.

Explore your local library. Not only can you borrow books for free, you can also check out movies and download music. Plus, many libraries have story times, movies and other activities for kids and teens during the summer.

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