

LEARNING OUTDOORS (& IN)

What's Inside...

- ◆ Learning is fun!
- ◆ Rainy Days
- ◆ Summer Learning
- ◆ Safety Tips



Parents work hard all year, but especially in the summer. Not just for a paycheck but keeping their children entertained with fun activities. You might think that because an activity is fun, it is not educational. However, it is important to recognize the educational value of “summer fun.” It is lighter later, summer is more relaxing and kids are playing all day outdoors and in. Summer is the perfect time for children to discover that learning is fun and can happen anywhere. Learning can take place whether you are taking a trip to a far-off place or spending the summer in your own neighborhood. Keeping the ideas creative, fun, and inexpensive is the challenge that all families face!

Play is the work, the occupation of childhood, and a cherished part of our early memories.

Finding a Balance

When the warm air and sunshine finally break through the clouds, kids and, sometimes, parents think the days should be non-stop fun. However, the reality is that most parents still work during the summer, so they have to take advantage of what time they do have off of work to make activities fun and educational. In addition, parents need their downtime too. So it is important to create a balance between structured and unstructured activities. That way, activities can also be child-directed and not always require adult instruction. Parents can set up toys and activities that children can access with parents supervising but not necessarily directing their play. Be creative!



How parents can help develop a child's attention span:

- Encourage children to read longer books.
- Encourage children to talk about things they have done.
- Limit the number of hours spent with TV, videos, and other spectator entertainment.
- Select toys, games, and activities which require mental challenges or just physical activity.
 - ☺ a puzzle
 - ☺ Lego blocks
 - ☺ hop scotch
 - ☺ jump rope
 - ☺ coloring books
 - ☺ blank paper and crayons

Even on a Rainy Day... Don't let a little rain keep your kids from enjoying their summer! Bring the outdoors indoors.....

- ✱ Bring outdoor games in: Play basketball with a soft foam or sponge ball using any type of basket for the “hoop.” Have kids shoot from different parts of the room or in different ways.
- ✱ Make a sand-free sandbox: Use a large plastic bin or box and fill with oatmeal, rice, beans, etc. and stock with scoops, funnels, toy cars, toy people, etc. whatever interests your child.
- ✱ Up, Up and Away!: Blow up balloons and play keep them in the air or “volleyball.” Take precautions for balloon pieces with young kids.
- ✱ Field trip: Take a trip to an indoor pool, ice or roller rink, bowling alley, or inflatable play space to expend some energy.
- ✱ Get wet anyway!: Suit up with boots, raincoats and warm socks and get outside! Splash in puddles, twirl your umbrella, “quack” like ducks and “ribbit” like frogs. Then come inside to a warm bath or cup of soup.

SOURCE: Holecko, www.About.com

Did you know what your child was learning when they.....???

Activity	Related Skills/Goals	Age Ranges
Ball Play		
Track rolling ball with eyes Rolling back and forth Throwing/catching balls of different sizes and hardness. Underhand & overhand throw, bouncing, two-hand catch	Visual tracking Cause & effect Social, joint attention Eye-hand coordination	4-8 months 1-2 years by around age 5
Kicking balls of different sizes and hardness. Encourage switching legs to kick.	Balance Coordination	Walks into ball—1-2years Swing leg to kick—2-3years
Hopscotch		
Bending over without falling Standing on one foot Hopping on one foot Jumping with two feet Drawing the hopscotch board	Balance Strength Coordination Motor Planning Pre-writing	2-3 years 2 1/2 - 3 1/2 years 3-4 years 2-3 years 5 years
Swing		
Push young children in baby swing Encourage preschoolers to push their legs out & pull them in Talk to them about dangers of walking in front/behind swing	Sensory stimulation Balance, strength & coordination	0-2 years 3-5 years
Walk/Run		
Walk around neighborhood/park in stroller or on own Run through water sprinkler Walk in bare feet on grass, sidewalk, driveway (be sure pavement is not too hot!) Jumping in puddles, off simple steps, over small objects Hike through nature park/zoo looking at birds, trees, animals Change walking style: marching, skipping, hopping, pretend to be airplane, bear, etc.	Develop leg muscles Coordination Sensory stimulation Motor control Language stimulation Imagination/pretend play	All ages 1-5 years 1-5 years 2-5 years 2-5 years 3-5 years
Blow Bubbles		
Tracking bubbles with eyes Popping bubbles with one finger Sound/word play— “pop, pop,” big/little, up/down, etc. Blowing bubbles	Visual Tracking Fine motor finger skills Language stimulation Oral motor	4-8 months 1 1/2 - 2 years 0-2 years 2-4 years
Art Play		
Sidewalk chalk Paint/marker/finger paint on easel “Paint” with water/mud on sidewalk/driveway Create a picture journal of summer activities either through drawings or photos	Pre-writing skills Sensory stimulation Imagination Creativity Expression of feelings	All ages can enjoy at their level of readiness/adult assistance

Activity	Related Skills/Goals	Age Ranges
Water Play		
Water sprinkler Sitting under the water spray Walking/running through water on the grass Jumping over the water spray Running under the water spray Pool/Lake/Ocean Walking through water Floating in the water (with assistance) Kicking legs/moving arms through the water Playing with balls and other floating toys Scooping and pouring water	Social Movement Balance Strength Sensory Stimulation Bilateral hand coordination	All ages can enjoy at their level of readiness/adult assistance
Sand Play		
Scooping and pouring sand with hands or cups/shovels Hiding toys under the sand Pushing cars and trucks through the sand Building sand castles	Bilateral hand coordination Memory/object permanence Sensory Stimulation Creativity	1-5 years 1-2 years 1-5 years 3-5 years
Dress Up		
Pulling up /down shorts Putting on/taking off shoes/sandals Comb hair Pretend play—zoo keeper/zoo animals, fireman, etc. Create stories	Dressing skills Self-care Social Creativity Speech/language stimulation	2-3 years 2-4 years 3-4 years 2-5 years 3-5 years



For that long car ride.....

- ☺ **Download audiobooks online** and play them on your iPod dock in the car.
- ☺ **Pack alphabet magnets** for your child to play with on a metal baking pan.
- ☺ **Start a scavenger hunt.** Have him look for a dog in a yard, a construction cone, and a baby in a stroller. On the highway? Look for a car with another kid in it, a yellow billboard, and a dirty truck.
- ☺ **Broaden the search.** See if he can spot things you can eat, wear as a hat, or use to decorate your living room.
- ☺ **Make up songs and stories about objects you pass.** "See that moving van? I think the people are moving to the North Pole!"
- ☺ **Count blue cars.** When he sees two, tell him to count clouds. When he finds three, switch to finding four green signs.

SOURCES

12 Rainy Day Activities by Catherine Holecko—
http://familyfitness.about.com/od/waystoplay/tp/rainy_day_activities.htm
 Top Summer Safety Tips by Amanda Rock—<http://preschoolers.about.com/od/healthsafety/a/summersafety.htm>



Summer Safety Tips

Before you Head Out the Door:

Prepare for a Day in the Sun!

- ◆ Lather everyone up with sunscreen. Use at least SPF 30 designed to protect against UVA & UVB rays
- ◆ Pack a bag that includes:
 - extra sunscreen
 - hats
 - water/snacks
 - cell phone
- ◆ Wear appropriate light clothing for the activity & bring a change of clothes



SOURCE: Rock, www.About.com

In Your Yard

- ◆ If you have a pool, be sure to have a fence that locks. Talk to kids about water safety!
- ◆ Close and lock outside storage, such as sheds, storage bins, etc. where small children can hide and become trapped.

At the Beach or Pool

- ◆ Talk about water safety with your little one before you go—no running near the edge, no jumping in without you present.
- ◆ No child should be in the water without an adult on hand, even if they know how to swim or have a flotation device!

At the Playground

- ◆ Make sure equipment is age- and size-appropriate for your child
- ◆ Check out equipment for sharp edges, open ended hooks, etc.
- ◆ Check out the surface—usually rubber mat, wood chips, sand
- ◆ Touch everything—is it too hot for bare skin?
- ◆ Do the same with your swing set at home!
- ◆ Be close at hand in case your child has trouble with some of the equipment
- ◆ Bring plenty of water to drink

In the Car

- ◆ Never leave a child alone in the car! Even with windows open, the car can get very hot, very quickly!

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**WHILE WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN,
THEY TEACH US.**



30 Years
Caring for All Children

Workshops of Interest

The ECDC can provide information and workshops on a variety of topics tailored to the interests and needs of parents and early childhood professionals. Resources are available on such topics as general child development, developmental issues for children with special needs, coping strategies, and specific disabilities.

Workshops include:

- Including All Kids
- Making Parent Partnerships
- Early Childhood Development: The Meaning of Red Flags
- Positive Guidance and Behavior Strategies
- Moving On: Children and Families Facing Transition
- What Are Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education?
- What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?
- Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Who We Are

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) is a regional technical assistance center for the State Education Department providing information, referral and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with young children birth to five. We are located at Syracuse University's Center on Human Policy.

**ECDC services to families are
free and confidential.**

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