

Add Structure to Summer

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how to add structure
TO SUMMER

LIVE WELL UTAH

By the time August rolls around, the excited shouts of “School’s out!” have faded to the drone of “I’m bored,” or the

shock that, for most children, school begins again this month. There is still time to create routines that will make the most of the summer and help ease the transition into a successful school year.

While youth may say they want lots of freedom to do as they wish this summer, the truth is that they will become bored quickly without some structure to their day. Younger kids will benefit most from knowing what to expect each day – even if it is only a couple hours of planned activities.

An online fact sheet from Iowa State University Extension titled “Creating Home Environments that Help Kids Succeed at School,” reminds readers that extended time outside the classroom can have a negative impact on children’s ability to be ready to move to the next level/grade this fall. In fact, it can take weeks to get children back to where they need to be.

Not convinced? Consider these benefits for parents and their children as identified by Kimberly Greder, Iowa State University Extension family life specialist:

- Predictable schedules help kids feel safe and secure.
- Routines help children know their needs are being met and will be met in the future.
- Routines help children develop self-control and self-esteem.
- Summer routines reduce anxiety, stress and acting out behaviors.

The good news is that parents don’t need to “reinvent the wheel” when it comes to planning out what the routines might look like for their family. By scanning through various blog and articles posted by everyone from psychologists, teacher to other parents, families can pick and choose what will work best for them. Here is a summary of some great suggestions:

1. Set daily expectations. Even if the daily expectations are

simple such as showering, making their bed, and picking up their room, kids will benefit from some structure to start their day. These should be the minimum expectations before they are allowed free time. By making these decisions up front, they can be put on the child's personal calendar or added to the family calendar.

2. The family calendar. Print off a blank calendar created on the computer or locate an extra wall calendar at home that can later be posted in an area accessible to all family members. As a family, go through the calendar and add all the known holidays, trips or reunions you know are coming up throughout the months ahead. Include any other commitments individual family members may have, as well such as classes or sports practices and doctor's appointments/check-ups.

3. Plan time to be together as a family (and make it fun). This may include adding to the calendar more family trips (day trips or weekends), weekly hikes, or an evening one day a week to be home for games, dinner and movies. If it doesn't get put on the calendar, it most likely will be a forgotten idea. The important thing to remember with this suggestion is to allow everyone a chance to contribute to the brainstorming process.

4. Include time for summer school stuff. Even if it is only 30 minutes a day, several days per week should include time for reading (along with trip to the library). Add in time to practice math skills and perhaps conduct some simple science experiments. There are workbooks and activity sheets available on educational websites or perhaps teachers have sent some worksheets home. For example math-drills.com, education.com, and readingrockets.org.

One blog that outlines a fun approach using daily themes for parents to use each day for time together with their children is found at some-whatsimple.com. For example, the suggested theme for Thursday is "Be Thoughtful Thursday," with the suggestion that time be set aside for writing letters, making

cookies and performing service.



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