

# 4 Simple End of Summer Ways to Connect with Your Kids



*Summer is winding down, but it isn't over yet. These last few weeks of summer are the perfect time to have fun and connect with the kids in your life.*

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## The Four E's of Summer

Summer is *almost* over, which means kids still need activities to keep them busy, and school isn't too far in the future. Consider the following steps to help you to create healthy, productive and, above all, fun activities for your children.

### 1. Encourage Proper Nutrition

The risk of childhood obesity and other health factors can be combated with proper eating habits. Give your children plenty of encouragement to stay healthy this summer. One activity

that is great for encouraging proper nutrition (and it also helps build strong relationships by working side-by-side on a task) is gardening. Take your children to a local garden nursery and choose fruits and vegetables to plant in your garden. As you describe how the plant will look and how the fruit of the plant will taste, allow your child to pick the fruit or vegetable. When children are involved in the planting, growing and harvesting process their knowledge of healthy eating habits are greatly increased. Another great activity is preparing healthy foods and meals. Include your children in menu planning, grocery shopping, as well as food preparation for making delicious meals. Check out [eatwellutah.org](http://eatwellutah.org) and [extension.usu.edu/foodsense](http://extension.usu.edu/foodsense) for more healthy eating ideas.

## **2. Enhance Creativity**

Creativity is a very important process that helps a child gain powerful problem solving skills as well as exploring different ideas. Creativity can also lead to discovering hidden talents. A perfect activity to enhance your child's creativity are crafts or DIY activities such as home and yard décor. Create different types of décor alongside your child, such as painting stepping stones or miniature figurines that can be placed in the home, flower beds, or gardens.

Remember an important part of creativity is allowing children to explore and play in a safe environment without restraints or distractions, with minimal guidance (i.e., let them get dirty and make a mess!). Use positivity as you accept and praise their creative projects, and limiting rejecting unusual ideas. Allow sufficient time for your child to explore all possibilities, moving from popular to more original ideas.

### **3. Encourage Mathematics and Literacy**

Math and literacy don't need to wait for school. Did you know students can lose up to a 1/3 of the knowledge they gained during the school year? Help you student retain all that hard-earned knowledge. Encourage your child to participate in as much mathematics or literacy activities as they can without overwhelming them. These activities can be anything that involve numbers, reading or writing, such as scavenger hunts, read-a-thons, cooking with recipes, library trips, or reading with your child for at least 20 minutes a day. Most local libraries provide lists of great read-aloud books for any ages, which can be a great source of entertainment for you and your children. By engaging your child in these activities, you are helping them to retain the knowledge they gained during the previous school year.

### **4. Extra Time with Your Child**

To some adults, packing a picnic or going to the park may not seem like the most exciting way to spend their afternoon, but to a child it can bring so much joy and excitement to their day as well as make them feel special. Spending extra time with their child can make all the difference in the social, mental and emotional health of your child.

If you're unsure about what activity your child would like to participate in with you, simply ask them. Commit to your child and set aside time to participate in that activity. By spending a few extra minutes or hours, you're guaranteeing a stronger and prolonged relationship with your child.

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*This article was written by Whitney Trapp, former Family and*

*Consumer Sciences summer intern and Mealanie D. Jewkes, Extension Associate Professor, Utah State University Salt Lake County Extension. [Republished from 2015.](#)*

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## References

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