

The Parent's Notebook

IT'S SUMMERTIME!

Now that summer is in full bloom, it seems appropriate to address the issue of summer activities, schedules, and routines. Just because school is no longer in session does not mean that exposure to academics, regular routines, structured activities, and discipline should be absent from family life. To be sure, children and teens need free time and periods of relaxation. However, it is clearly unnecessary, nor is it helpful, to completely abandon all the and routines that usually accompany the school year. The summer months should certainly be less stressful, more flexible, and enjoyable, but to impose little or no structure on time and activities is a potential breeding ground for laziness and will make the transition into the school year much more difficult. A few tips that may help in balancing things out are listed below.



- While a degree of flexibility is certainly appropriate, youngsters should not be allowed to stay up as late as they like or sleep until late in the day. Having a routine bedtime, albeit later, and a routine wakeup time in the morning maintains orders and will not require such dramatic adjustment in the fall.
- Participation in available low to no cost activities in the community are fun and stimulating for children. Vacation Bible School, academic and sports camps, family camps, trips to the zoo and the local library, etc. all offer interesting, edifying and enriching activities.
- Although children do not need to get with friends every day, it is helpful to provide opportunities for them to spend time with peers. If no youngsters live in your neighborhood, assist them in contacting some of their friends and schedule reciprocal times to get together. Of course, it is important that parents are fully familiar with the family situations of friends. Take the time to get to know the parents and the family of your youngster's friends.
- Encourage exposure to academic-like activities, including reading, drawing, writing, puzzle books, computer math games, and academic camps. This does not have to be for great lengths of time or even every day, but engagement in such activities will refresh your youngster's knowledge, stimulate new learning, and reduce the amount of "warm up" time required at the beginning of the school year.
- Whatever disciplines are in place during the school year (e.g., chores, special projects, Bible study, and family devotions) should be continued throughout the summer months. In fact, the summer months can provide a wealth of opportunities to spend more time with your children in a relaxed way teaching them new skills and spiritual truths.
- Teens old enough to work should be encouraged to obtain a job or start a business and learn how to manage money.
- If possible, take some time for vacation and do some traveling. This exposes your youngsters to new places and experiences in totally different settings. Vacations can also be stressful, however, because of the additional time spent together in close quarters. Plan ahead and keep things as relaxed and pleasant as possible.

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