



How to Create a Summer Schedule for Kids

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School is almost out and the kids are home, and it won't be long before parents everywhere yearn for the back-to-school activities that herald the annual return to the classroom. Long summer days can feel even longer for families because kids have a lot of excitement and energy to burn!

Children get bored and parents grow irritated as the season wears on, which is understandably frustrating for all involved! So, what can a parent do to survive the dog days of summer while making it a memorable one for the kids? The answer is simple: dust off the planner and make a schedule!

Why Make a Summer Schedule for Kids?

If you have a career outside the home, it's more than likely that you have a set plan or routine that drives your productivity in the workplace. Even if you stay or work at home, you still probably have a plan to follow each day. That's because everybody needs to organize their time or else nothing would get done! While spontaneity can be great fun, there are often even greater rewards to planning time, whether it's for an upcoming vacation, or simply running errands.



When it comes to kids, our little ones need to learn the benefits of time management. Babies aren't born with stellar organizational skills, and as children progress through childhood, they tend to want to do anything that comes to their minds as it happens. What parent hasn't heard these requests over and over again during the summer. "Can we go swimming today?", "I want ice cream!", "Let's go to the zoo!", "I want to play outside!"

More often than not, kids want to do these things at the most inopportune times, or when it simply isn't feasible. And any parent bombarded with constant cries of "I'm bored!" will soon grow tired of the season. All that said, this frustration can easily be avoided by planning a summer daily schedule that is routine and predictable but can still save space for having fun!

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How to Create a Killer Summer Schedule

The first rule is to remember that as a parent, it is not your job to entertain your children every minute of the day! Sometimes boredom is inevitable and can even help your child to self-regulate emotions or entertain himself. However, it is totally possible to create a routine that fits perfectly in the scope of your family's unique schedule. Whether working or staying at home, follow these tips to begin creating your child's individualized summer plan:

Go with the flow

Once school lets out, keep in mind that it will take a week or two to determine the best modifications to your family's routine. Considering this, take that time to step back and see what feels natural for your child. Step back and observe the changes you are automatically making for your kids. Maybe bedtime was pushed back until 9 instead of 8? Is dinner time later, too? Perhaps your child is sleeping in longer than she was on school days. Whatever changes you make, remember that if it seems natural to you and your family, the schedule you end up making will likely be followed as opposed to a random and unrealistic plan that doesn't account for your child's natural habits already in place.



Go to bed later without sacrificing precious sleep

Most kids don't want to go to sleep at their usual bedtimes when it's still light outside! And who can blame them? Why go to sleep when there's daylight to ride bikes or go to the playground? Summer days are longer, and the sun is shining well into the evening hours until the fall. If your child isn't feeling sleepy at 8 PM, there's no reason to force it unless he needs to be up early for summer camp or daycare. If that isn't a concern, go to bed later, but be careful to ensure that kids get enough sleep overall. If kids go to bed later, but still wake up earlier, this makes a recipe for an overtired kid! If you end up pushing back bedtime, make sure he or she is sleeping in longer in the morning to compensate for any loss.

Allow some time to adjust

As they say, Rome wasn't built in a day. And kids, just like most people, struggle with any change of routine. Be patient and know that it takes time to build a new routine, even if it's just for summer. Kids can become overtired or overstimulated easily, so watch children for signs that they need more sleep or more independent playtime.



Don't be afraid of downtime!

Never forget that time to decompress or play independently is critical for any child's development. Every moment will not be fun, as time must be spent completing chores, working on academics, and entertaining oneself. It's also important for parents to have time to run errands, complete household management tasks, take care of career-related

work, and to spend some time enjoying the summer as an adult! That said, don't be afraid to schedule in downtime and independent learning or playtime, or maybe even a few afternoons for drop-in childcare so grownups can take care of business!

Timing is everything!

Plan for special days or vacations. In other words, space out all the fun stuff! Since kids can become easily overstimulated, make sure to spread out the special fun activities to keep them happy. This is especially important on vacations. It might not be the best idea to plan multiple theme parks in successive days. Instead, spread out the energy-spending events by planning for less active trips in between. For instance, if you're headed to Disney World, go to Magic Kingdom, but schedule a day for shopping or a beach day before heading out to another park. Likewise, at home, spread out fun activities over the summer to space them so your child has energy and fun throughout the entire season!

Sample Daily Summer Schedule for Kids

Of course, the best routine is one that accommodates your family's unique routine which is dependent on a variety of factors. If you're looking for a place to start planning, try the below plan out to start, and tweak it to meet your family's needs.

- 7:00-8:00 AM: It's time to wake up and start the day! During this time, get out of bed, make breakfast, eat, and allow some time for clean-up and light morning chores. Be sure to involve children in the daily morning chores. Some ideas are cleaning up the dishes, making beds, and tidying up bedrooms, if needed.
- 8:30-10:30 AM: This is a 2-hour block of time that can be used however you see fit. It could be used for additional daily chores, like laundry and vacuuming because many families like to have the cleaning out of the way before afternoon activities. It can also be used as structured learning or playtime, or because it is usually cooler in the morning, this would be an ideal time to schedule outdoor activities like swimming lessons. Alternatively, try running your errands or getting shopping done while younger kids are less likely to be cranky or tired.
- 10:30-10:45 AM: Kids usually need a bit of fuel to keep going until lunch, so try offering a light and healthy snack and drink in the mid-morning. If you're out and about, take along a granola bar or a fruit pouch for easy on-the-go snacking.
- 10:45-12:00 PM: This space of time before lunch is also ideal for outdoor activities before the heat of the day. Take a trip to the park or utilize the morning hours before lunch to take a special trip to the zoo. Additionally, this is another great opportunity to

run errands, go shopping for your family's needs, or tackle arts and crafts or academic practice, like math, science, or ELA activities.

- 12:00-1:00 PM: Try to shoot for a noon lunchtime each day unless you're on vacation or having a special day out of the house. Take this hour to make lunch, eat, and for clean-up. Don't forget to encourage kids to clean up their dishes!
- 1:00-3:30 PM: This big block of time coincides with the heat of the day! Use it to full advantage for fun outdoor water activities like playing in the sprinkler, hopping in a backyard pool, or heading out to the beach if you live close by. Be sure to slather on the sunscreen and bring plenty of drinking water to protect little ones from the heat and sun! Alternatively, this could be a great time to make a trip out to the Children's Museum, library, or to stay inside and work on arts and crafts.
- 3:30-4:00 PM: After an afternoon of fun, cool off with an afternoon popsicle, or provide another snack to make little tummies last until dinner. Take a few moments to wind children down, and for younger kids, consider a short nap if your preschooler still needs it. Of course, feel free to sneak in a nap a bit earlier. Be sure to plan your child's time according to his or her own individual needs.
- 4:00-5:30 PM: After winding down during snack time, many parents are gearing up for dinner by preparing the nightly meal. This makes for a great opportunity to encourage individual learning or quiet time. Children should learn to entertain themselves and to self-regulate their emotions and activity. The Kids Academy Talented and Gifted app could be an awesome and educational way for your child to spend this time while you are cooking dinner and getting ready for the evening. An educational TV show or some silent reading are other great options.
- 5:30-6:30 PM: This time could be used to come together as a family to eat dinner, whether eating out at a restaurant, ordering take out, or a home-cooked meal. During dinner, talk to your child about their day and ask kids what they learned during independent learning time, or what they watched or read that day. When your child reviews the day's activities and repeats it aloud, it becomes more likely that they will remember anything they learned that day. This will solidify memorable events and any information they learned that day. Lastly, use this time for your evening chores, like cleaning up the table and washing the dishes.
- 6:30-7:30 PM: During the school year, most parents are busy putting kids in the bath and rushing them off to bed at this time. However, in the summer, feel free to let your kids stay up later! Most children have trouble sleeping when it's still light outside, so use after dinner hours to head back outside for some evening fun! If you live in the south, this is an especially ideal time to play outside because of the cooler evening

hours. Get a jar, poke some holes in the top and catch fireflies with your child. Go on a short bike ride around the neighborhood or a local nearby trail.

- 7:30-8:30 PM: It's time for the nightly wind-down to decompress from a full day of learning and playing. Use this hour to give children baths and read a bedtime story together. Lay in bed with your child and tell stories and follow your usual nightly routine.
- 8:30 PM: It's bedtime! By this time, most kiddos are ready to catch some much-needed shut-eye. If you live in a location where it is still light in the 8 o'clock hour, be sure to invest in quality black-out curtains or shades that will filter the light out of your child's bedroom in the evenings.

Obviously, the above sample framework won't work for every family, but is again intended as a model that can be tweaked to meet your needs. The times can be vary depending on your individual work or daily routine, but feel free to use it as a model to insert your own activities or ideas!

By creating a summer schedule for children, parents can keep days consistent and predictable for kids, since all children thrive when given routines. Even with a well-defined plan, spontaneity can be worked in with ease, especially when on a vacation. In addition, with a thoughtful plan, kids are sure to get valuable learning time that is needed to keep academic skills on point throughout the summer!

