

# Summer Survival Guide

2020 West Essex, NJ



## Summer in the Time of Coronavirus

With the last day of school fast approaching, parents are asking *"How can I plan an active, fun and SAFE summer for my family?"*

School's out...now what?! Here are general guidelines for parents of kids & teens. Feel free to reach out to me for personalized recommendations, especially in cases of ADHD, anxiety, depression or autism. Cheers to a happy and healthy summer! ~Dr. Carla Andrews, PsyD [www.drcarlaandrews.com](http://www.drcarlaandrews.com)

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### DAILY RHYTHM

No need for a strict routine; instead, offer a guiding structure.

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### EXPLORE & LEARN

Balance screen time with new activities & hobbies.

3

### USE IT OR LOSE IT

Beat "summer brain drain" by integrating spurts of daily learning.

**Free ADDitude webinar on 6/8/20: [Learning, Fun, Free Time: How to Balance & Structure the Lazy Days of Summer for Children with ADHD](#)**



**Free download from ADDitude: ["20 Secrets to a Smarter Summer."](#)**



**Local YMCAs & libraries such as [Caldwell](#), [West Caldwell](#) & [Livingston](#) offer online services, e.g. acting, dance, piano and improv lessons!**

## Introduce a guiding structure to each day

No need for a minute-by-minute itinerary, but be sure to maintain a guiding structure every day—and be clear with your kids about this from Day One! Anchor your child's day around circadian rhythms, that is, a generally consistent time for:

- bedtime
- waketime
- meal/ snack times
- activity type (educational time, outside time, free time, family time etc.)

### [7 Daily Intentions for Brains In Search of Purpose](#)

is a great article for families, emphasizing daily commitments to:

1. Do something for your brain
2. Do something for the house
3. Do something for your body
4. Do something for yourself
5. Do something for someone else
6. Do something for your space
7. Do something for your future goals

## Screens are OK, under some conditions

Even before COVID-19, the average American child was spending nearly 8 hours each day using screens for entertainment. Electronics are a fact of life. There's no need to completely banish all devices over the summer. In fact, research shows that some apps/videogames can have positive effects, especially around social engagement.



It's best to think of electronic devices as a tool to be used to your advantage.

- A. Limit use. Set defined times of day when your child can use electronics.
- B. Monitor your child's online activities and use blocking software to ensure safety. For example, [Freedom](#) is a program that blocks internet access during certain hours. [Leechblock](#) eliminates access to time-wasting sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.
- C. For purely entertaining screentime like videogames, have your child **earn this privilege**. That means s/he is allowed the device only after completing chores/responsibilities AND only after showing good behavior. Do not be afraid to tell your child s/he has lost electronics (for a short amount of time, maybe 30 minutes or one hour) until they start to show responsible behavior.

### SCREENTIME & SOCIALIZATION

Research shows that some apps/videogames can have positive effects, such as increasing processing speed, building working memory skills, as well as increasing pro-social behavior and social engagement. Especially in this time of social distancing, consider your child's (limited & appropriate) use of electronics an important means to stay connected to friends.



## Get Outside!

This is a no-brainer for summer! Block time every day to devote to the outdoors. Physical activity is necessary for building muscles but also for improving mood, behavior, attention, and learning! [Here are 60 ideas](#). Mix-and-match:

- free unstructured time (traditional activities like riding bikes, skateboards, water play)
- exercise/ sport-based activities (swimming, basketball practice, running)
- family-based activities such as a family fitness tracker competition. Compare daily steps (measured with a fitbit or basic pedometer) with a final prize for the winner.



## Teach daily life skills

The lazy days of summer are a great opportunity to focus on activities of daily living, chores and responsibilities. [Here's a great article from the Fatherly perspective](#). All ages can help:

- cook meals/ prepare snacks
- help with laundry (even matching socks!)
- tidy up his/her own room & common areas
- care for pets
- learn about basic finances (earning money for chores, saving, spending wisely)
- volunteer (become pen pals with an elderly neighbor, donate used toys, display a window sign thanking personal heroes)

## Practice One New Skill

Talk to your child about their natural interests, hobbies, and talents. Perhaps they'd like to learn an instrument, photography, poetry, robotics, gymnastics, or martial arts? Visit your local library or YMCA online. As few as 20 minutes each day can build a new habit that fosters commitment, perseverance, and enjoyment.

## Learn at Home

Studies show that "summer brain drain" is real, and even small learning activities each day can help kids maintain their academic skill level. Set aside a consistent time each day when your child will participate in some kind of learning activity.

For more formal academics:

- [Epic](#) has 40,000 e-books & audiobooks for kids under 12 to explore a variety of topics
- [Quizlet](#) lets students "study on the go"
- The [Bookful](#) app brings stories to life using 3D/AR interactive books & games
- [Education.com](#) offers digital resources developed by educational experts
- Here's an [Edutopia article](#) with more sites

For more informal, creative learning activities:

- Read recipes, comics, song lyrics, magazines like *National Geographic for Kids*
- Write emails to friends or family, start a blog, create a photo journal or scrapbook.
- Practice math in board games like Monopoly, Mastermind, and Qwirkle. Online interactive math games like FunBrain, Cool Math 4 Kids, and Math Cats also make math fun.

## A WORD ON EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Invite family discussion around thoughts & feelings about how this summer is different from past experiences. Families can practice the ["3 Good Things"](#) exercise on a daily basis: Think of 3 good things that happened today, say/ write them down, and reflect on them. This can bring about deep gratitudes like appreciating the health of our family, or even beating a personal videogame record!