

Suggestions for what to do with kids in summer

By Vicki Barber

Yes, summer is almost over and this is often the toughest time for families, especially kids. There's no longer quite enough to do to keep them busy and they've run out of the entertaining fun. Now what?

Well, there's always TV and video games, but you've really tried to stay away from them. We all know that doesn't seem like the best use of time. So let's come up with some other activities that would help make the end of summer fun, yet not become too taxing for anyone.



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Games are great fun and great learning tools for those of us who would like to see a little learning going on as well as enjoyment. When was the last time you played Monopoly? How about Yahtzee or Scrabble? All three games are fun and Monopoly's definitely a great escape from the vagaries of the current economy. Just think, you can own houses and hotels and have a bank full of money – at least for a few hours. It's a great learning experience for kids, too. Yahtzee is great for math skills and Scrabble is fun for spelling and vocabulary, sandwiched in between the laughter of challenges that go awry. If your children are still on the younger side, try Chutes and Ladders. There's no reading required, but there's a lot of

counting going on.

Cribbage, chess, checkers, and Chinese checkers are fun too. Some games are more involved than others, so matching the game with the skill level of the child helps. I'm not advocating "letting" kids win. I've known too many children who can beat me at just about any game they learn how to play. Given a little time and practice, they become good in a relatively short period of time.

Trivial Pursuit comes in all shapes and questions these days. Mancala is fun too. One requires knowledge of a wide variety of subjects. The other requires strategy and perception; great skills for everyone.

If you're not into board games, card games work well, too. Gin Rummy, Hearts, Canasta, War, or Solitaire all have possibilities. Also, there are some games that require special decks of cards like Pinochle, Skip-Bo, or Crazy Eights. Often we have those decks lying around the house in some corner drawer. If not, the Dollar Stores may carry them.

Outside games are fun, too, whether playing or watching. From Little League to a pick-up game in the backyard, baseball/softball is still a great tradition. A little time on the basketball court is great for older ones, and there are little hoops now for the littler ones. Soccer is fun, especially after all the coverage the World Cup has gotten in the last few weeks.

Those all seem like they're organized and a team is necessary. Games like tag or hopscotch are just as much fun, and sometimes easier for the little ones to play.

Games are about fun and laughter, and they're also about enjoying each other, being close, and learning skills. Summer's almost over, but the enjoyment doesn't have to be. So let the games begin.

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