

Back to Summer Plans

By Barrington H. Brennen, April 17, 2013

Summer vacation can be an exciting time for students and yet most challenging for parents. It will provide about 2100 hours (90 days) free of structured academic programs for students. I want to caution parents not to consider summer break a time of freedom for their children but instead another opportunity for learning and growth. The truth is that many toddlers and teenagers learn their most negative skills and habits during the summer months. Parents, you are to be proactive by planning ahead of time what will happen when your children go “back to summer vacation.” Here are ten suggestions for “back to summer vacation” with your children:

1. Long before summer vacation begins, sit down with your children and design plans or activities to keep them active, energized, mentally alert, and socially healthy. Write down your plans.
2. As far as possible, depending on the age of your children, require that they make some money during the summer to go toward their personal projects or personal items that you will not purchase. Insist that out of the 2100 hours they work at least 200 hours in a way that will bring an income.
3. Make it a point this summer to teach your children a skill. For example, cooking, baking, sewing, gardening, painting, etc. All of these suggestions include both boys and girls. The girls and boys should be able to at least replace a button on a blouse or shirt, hem pants, wash clothes with and without the washing machine, iron, and make breakfast. Enroll them in one of the youth organizations such as the Pathfinders, Scouts, Boys or Girls Brigade, Awana, etc.
4. Make it a goal to learn something new this summer. Let the entire family think of a project to do. It could be learning everything about a country, how something is made, mastering graphic design, making straw baskets, etc. A great idea is to teach the children the basic parts of the automobile engine (battery, carburetor, radiator, etc) and how to change a tire, and how to change car oil, brake fluid, and power steering fluid. They can learn these things long before they are able to drive.
5. Have structured sleeping and television viewing hours. A big mistake parents make during the summer months is not to provide a structured environment for their children, even for the teenagers. Children should not be allowed to choose their own times to go to bed or watch any amount of television. Too many children develop bad habits during the summer months that impact them for the rest of their lives. Read my previous articles on television on my website www.soencouragement.org
6. Make sure there is at least one day a week for “television black-out time.” This means parents and children will not watch television or videos on any gadget on that day. They would have to be creative in entertaining themselves in a healthy way. Have your own family concert or karaoke.
7. Get out of doors and have fun or exercise at least three times a week. Swim. Walk. Run. Bike. Eat lunch by the beach, under the trees, etc.
8. Avoid going on a trip to Miami (overseas) to shop or purchase school supplies for the purpose of “saving money.” Check the prices locally before your go away to shop. Add up the total cost including all expenses. Too many parents waste money traveling to shop simply because they do not count the total cost of the trip. They might have saved on purchases but the cost of the tickets, hotel, transportation and food, make the trip very expensive. Why should one spend \$200 to buy a plane ticket to go overseas to purchase a \$25 DVD player when the same player is \$60 in our country? Purchasing locally can save at least \$200.

9. Read. Read. Read. Perhaps the best thing parents can do during the summer months is to require their children read books. Take them to local bookstores, libraries, or purchase them online. The number of books to be read should be based on the children's age. For example teenagers should read at least three books (100 to 130 pages in length), pre-teen should read two books, and the young children should read at least one book. Also spend 50 to 100 hours during the summer requiring your children to review their school work, or studying their textbooks. If you can afford it, enroll them in a structured tutoring program such as Oxford Learning, Sylvan Learning, etc., especially if they have deficiencies in reading, writing, and mathematics.
10. Renew your spiritual relationship with God during the summer months. Ensure your children go to a Vacation Bible School, church summer camp, etc. Have daily family worship. Go to a church of your choice each week.

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