

Quality fun Time

Often our lives get so hectic and scheduled that we forget about just spending time together as a family. Special family time is very valuable to children, regardless if it's a quiet activity at home, or out on a fun adventure. Setting aside time that is "just for them" lets them know how special and important they are. These are the times your children will remember, so get out and have fun!

FUN FAMILY TIME

- Maintain connections with family and friends by establishing rituals such as Friday pizza and game night, Saturday morning breakfast, or a Sunday afternoon cookout.
- Use the great outdoors – hikes, beach, bike riding, walks, picnics, boating, sledding, and skating.
- Setting "family time" aside is important. You don't have to make elaborate plans – just going for a walk near your home or picking up an ice cream.
- Have regular "special time" once a week where each child chooses an activity to do one on one with the parent of their choice.
- Pack a picnic and find a scenic spot near the water where there's lots of space to run, walk, and kick a ball around.
- Have a family movie night.
- Go to a family theater in your local community.
- Split up during family activities if the children are at different developmental stages so that everyone has a good time.
- Seasonal activities such as apple picking, winter carnivals, sleigh rides, ice skating, and building sand castles.
- Camping – even if it's in the backyard; bonfires at appropriate age.
- For a mini vacation from it all, drive to a campground mid-afternoon and select a campsite to build a fire. Roast hot dogs for dinner and marshmallows for dessert; put everyone back in the car to sleep at home!
- Singing and dancing.

- Gardening activities – let them plant and take care of their own flowerbed or vegetable garden.
- Make a walk into a "mystery hunt" (search for signs of spring, or count Christmas trees, or count animals); stop and guess what others hear or see.
- Swimming classes and free swims, join a summer swim club.
- Children's museum, aquarium, nature center, and zoo.
- Organized activities: Kindermusik, Gymboree, open gyms at local gymnastic facilities, Y programs, and local Parks and Recreation programs.
- Special "cuddling" routines before bed are special, reading favorite books and chatting about the activities of the day.

If you do things together as a family, then many activities will be memorable regardless of what they are. It's the TIME spent together, not necessarily WHAT is done.

NEED MORE IDEAS?

- Libraries often have free museum passes available and lists of local venues to visit.
- Local parent magazines.
- "Weekend" section of newspaper.

At Christmas time, make a paper chain and starting on December 1st take off a "link". Each link has an activity (donate some needed items to a shelter, give away old toys, write letters to Santa, or have a pizza party under the Christmas tree). It's a fun countdown to Christmas and a great way to bond with your family.