

Involvement in Family Travel Planning to Help Teach Valuable Skills

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theGPS

girl & parent "stuff"



Charting the direction you want her to go!

School's out for SUMMER!

*"Aaah, summer - that long anticipated stretch of lazy, lingering days, free of responsibility and rife with possibility. It's a time to hunt for insects, master handstands, practice swimming strokes, conquer trees, explore nooks and crannies, and make new friends."**

This issue of GPS will share ideas to let kids explore, learn, experience, play, create and make memories. Whether you're staying in town, taking a family vacation or experiencing a Girl Scout adventure, find opportunities to learn something new, do something you've never done before and appreciate the "gift" of summer break.

The Gift of a True Summer Break

By Annie Murphy Paul
Scholastic, Parent & Child June/July 2014

It starts with the updates on Facebook about the many enriching summer programs your friends' offspring are being signed up for. Next comes the hefty homework packets on the last day of school. By the time you read the annual onslaught of articles about the danger of "summer brain drain," you're completely overwhelmed - and ready to scream.

Is a break really supposed to be just like the school year? And if you don't get with the (academically minded) program, will your kids really be at risk of falling behind over the coming months?

I used to worry about that fate for my own sons, ages 5 and 8. But after a closer look at the research, including studies cited in many of those scary articles, I started to relax. I've even

adopted a mantra that I'm happy to share: Kids learn differently in the summer.



***Darell Hammond**, founder and CEO of KaBOOM!, an innovative nonprofit based in Washington, DC, that is saving play by ensuring there is a great place to play within walking distance of every child in America. Founded out of Hammond's apartment in 1996, KaBOOM! has raised \$200 million, rallied a million volunteers, led the hands-on construction of 2,000 playgrounds, and inspired a movement for the child's right to play.

source: http://www.amazon.com/Darell-Hammond/e/B004N8SWX2/ref=dp_byline_cont_ebooks_1

There is some evidence that the much hyped "summer slide" is real. Over break, most kids do lose the equivalent of two months of math know-how; those from low-income homes also lose two to three months of reading proficiency.

But when you look at summer from another angle - not as a crisis of fading skills, but as an opportunity to practice them in new ways - suddenly the season is cast in an (appropriately) sunny light.

For every study documenting how an extended, low-key break can set kids back, there's research showing how certain downtime activities can actually nudge them forward, boosting their brainpower, social savvy and emotional maturity, all of which will benefit them come fall.

Best of all, these learning opportunities are probably on your summer bucket list anyway. Check out our easy-breezy, *(continued, p. 2)*





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nag-free, and, yes, science-backed ways to prep your kids for the next school year – without really doing a thing.



Get Their Game On

Using games – digital ones as well as the low-tech kind with boards – improves spatial abilities, the set of skills needed to visualize how shapes fit together. These are key to math and science success. A study from the University of Toronto found that when girls play action games like Lego Marvel, they close the spatial ability gap commonly found between genders.

Girls Love Trips!

And Girl Scouts is a great place for them to learn how to plan and take exciting trips, because travel is built on a progression of activities – that is, one activity leads to the next.

Within the Girl Scout troop, girls are part of the planning process – deciding where to go, setting a budget, planning activities and earning the necessary funds. They learn key skills in problem-solving, cooperation, decision-making and money management that will help them throughout their lives.

If girls want to complete skill-building badge requirements as part of their trip, they can!



There is the Senior Traveler badge, which fits perfectly into planning a trip.



Cadettes can explore the food in other regions or countries for their New Cuisines badge.



Ambassadors can work on their Photographer badge while documenting their trip.



And get younger girls outdoors with the Brownie Hiker and Junior Camper badges!

Let 'em Read What They Want

Just reading four books over the summer is enough to keep literacy skills in shape. If your child isn't much of a bookworm, go ahead and let her pick out her own reading material.



Chat Them Up

Research reveals that debating, reminiscing and telling stories alongside adults improve kids' vocab and background knowledge, the factual info they draw on to better understand new concepts. Studies have also found that moms who tell rich, expressive stories about the past help develop their kids' capacity to understand others.

Hit the Road

Traveling to new places deepens a child's all-important background knowledge without much effort on parents. Seeing and experiencing something personally is a better vocab and geography booster than reading the terms in a textbook.



Get Imaginative

Researchers have discovered the value of daydreaming and pretend play. Both help kids of any age grasp complex emotions and events. The running conversation kids have as they play alone also helps them work out how to handle social scenarios. When kids play together, they're strengthening cooperation and problem-solving abilities.



So give the whole family a pass to play freely this summer!

Looking for Travel Ideas?

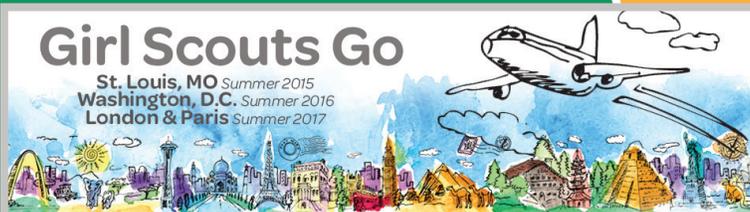
- Visit Girl Scout properties around the country! Use the Girl Scout Council Finder to get in touch and learn more.
- **GSUSA Getaways** are prepackaged weekend or short trip opportunities geared toward Girl Scout troops ages 11-17. Programming options are often included in the price, along with a few meals and sleeping arrangements.

It's one of the best things you can do to set your kids up for success now...

...and all year long!

Girl Scouts Go

St. Louis, MO Summer 2015
Washington, D.C. Summer 2016
London & Paris Summer 2017



- And **Girl Scouts Go** is a unique new way for girls to travel the globe with Girl Scouts Heart of the South. Girls in grades 6-12 can start planning now for trips to Washington D.C. in summer 2016 and Paris and London in summer 2017.

stock photography and artwork p.1 & 2 courtesy google.com



Find local activities to inspire creativity, learning and adventure in children!

Discovery Park of America
www.discoveryparkofamerica.com

Tunica River Park and Mississippi River Museum
www.tunicariverpark.com/mississippi-river-museum

Tupelo Buffalo Park and Zoo
www.tupelobuffalopark.com

Go Ape Treetop Adventure
www.shelbyfarmspark.org/go-ape-treetop-adventure

Delta Blues Museum
www.deltabluesmuseum.org

Memphis Library
www.memphislibrary.org

National and State Parks
www.mississippi.gov/content/Pages/StateNationalParks.aspx
www.tnstateparks.com

Girl Scout Events
www.girlscoutshs.org/calendar

FOLLOWING THE GPS



Items for girls ages 5 ~ 7 (Daisies)

Items for girls ages 7 ~ 10 (Brownies)

Items for girls ages 10 ~ 13 (Juniors)

Items for girls ages 12 ~ 14 (Cadettes)

Items for girls ages 14 ~ 16 (Seniors)

Items for older girls ages 15 ~ 18 (Ambassadors)

Unplug Their Play

Electronic devices are an easy distraction, but kids need creative play and time outdoors.

Gwen Dewar, PhD, founder of Parenting Science, offers insight to "Avoiding an Electronic Childhood: Six Tips for Replacing Screen Time with 'Unplugged' Play."

According to recent surveys, American preschoolers spend an average of four hours each day watching TV. It represents a dramatic shift from the childhood of our ancestors. What are the consequences? Researchers are still trying to figure it out, but some points seem clear.

- Babies don't learn to talk by watching TV. Studies show that babies acquire language by interacting with real, live people. When television becomes a substitute for real-world conversations, children develop weaker verbal skills.
- Screen time poses a special threat to sleep. Electronic screens emit a type of light that tells the brain to delay the release of melatonin, the hormone that makes us feel drowsy at night. As a result, kids who use technology before bedtime may have more trouble falling asleep—and be more likely to suffer from sleep-related behavior problems.
- Background TV can interfere with a child's ability to concentrate and communicate. Experiments suggest that toddlers have more trouble focusing on tasks when a TV is playing in the background – even if they don't appear to be watching the show. In addition, background TV reduces the quantity and quality of family social interactions.
- Electronic entertainment may crowd out creative play. In one recent study, researchers analyzed children's everyday schedules, and noticed a link between screen time and the neglect of play. For every hour of TV watched each week, kids experienced a 10% reduction in creative activities, like make-believe, arts and crafts, and playing with non-electronic toys.

So an electronic childhood might contribute to sleep problems and cheat kids of important developmental experiences. That's why pediatricians urge us to replace screen time with real-world social experiences and lots of "unplugged" play. But how do we make it work? Here are some evidence-based tips.

1. Choose toys that allow for kids to create their own fun.

Building blocks, preschool craft supplies, and dress-up props are good examples: They keep kids busy, inspire creativity, and encourage children to engage in mind-expanding, make-believe play.

2. Take advantage of your child's "me too" attitude.

Experiments reveal that young children are eager to lend a helping hand, and kids are naturally inclined to mimic

the things they see us do. It's how they learn. So when you've got chores to do, offer toddlers opportunities to participate in the hustle and bustle. Let them try their hands at watering the grass, dusting the furniture, or "cooking" with a few pots and pans on the floor. Sorting the socks might engage them as much as any store-bought game!

3. Use storytelling to spark ideas for pretend play.

Reading at bedtime is nice, but consider taking a few minutes to share stories during the daytime too. Studies suggest that tales of adventure and fantasy can have immediate, positive effects on kids – boosting their creativity and inspiring make-believe.

4. Get on the floor and play with your child... but don't be bossy.

Kids can learn a lot when we play with them, but it depends on the approach we take. If we act bossy or controlling ("Don't let the cows enter the barn through the window—they have to go through the door...") we're likely to turn kids off and make it harder for them to develop the skills they need to entertain themselves.

5. Physically inactive? Don't blame electronics. Instead, fight for your child's right to play outdoors.

You might think that your child's inactivity is caused by the lure of electronics, but research suggests it's partly the other way around: Our kids become couch potatoes because they lack opportunities to go outside. So take a hard look at what's keeping your child indoors, and seek out solutions. Worried about traffic or crime? Look for safe

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local parks and playgrounds, and meet-ups with other concerned families. Deterred by the weather? Dress kids for the elements, lather on the sunscreen, and let them get a little wet.

6. Keep television and other electronic entertainments off your child's radar.

As noted above, background TV is distracting, and the mere presence of a device can invite temptation. Moreover, studies show that kids with electronic media in their bedrooms tend to rack up more screen time and get less sleep at night. So turn off the TV when nobody is watching, and keep devices out of sight or hidden away. The less kids are reminded of electronic devices, the less they'll want to use them.

Building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

The Benefits of Camp

Reprinted from American Camp Association



The camp experience enriches lives and changes the world.

Camp provides children with a community of caring adults, who nurture experiential education that results in self-respect and appreciation for human value. All of the outcomes – self-identity, self-worth, self-esteem, leadership, and self-respect – build personal competencies.

These personal competencies are reflected in the four “C’s” of the camp community: **compassion, contribution, commitment, and character!** For years, campers’ parents have reported that when their children return home from camp they are more caring, understand the importance of giving, are more equipped to stand up for what they know is right, and are willing to be more responsible. These are the qualities that will help build a successful nation and a civil society.

Children are at less risk at camp where they have a sense of community, develop intergenerational relationships, and learn through first-hand experiences. Trained, caring adult role models help children feel loved, capable, and included. Camp helps children grow by providing a supervised, positive environment that has safety as a primary commitment.

Camp professionals have enormous power in conveying simple teachable moments . . . special moments of passing experiences touched by the human spirit. These fleeting moments of time build three significant benefits campers derive from camp: Value people, value the natural world, value sense of contribution.

Through the camp experience, young people learn to understand the strength of mankind. They also develop an appreciation for the qualities required to create and protect relationships with others. Campers realize the need to protect not only each other, but also the environment in which they live. Children who attend camp develop connections with the world. We never underestimate the simplest lesson or the briefest wink of time. *It may be a star in someone’s horizon for all eternity.*



The report, “More Than S’mores: Successes and Surprises in Girl Scouts’ Outdoor Experiences,” published by the Girl Scout Research Institute,

finds involvement in the outdoors contributes to a girl’s leadership development, creates memories, and promotes environmental stewardship. Girl Scouts helps girls get outdoors. Seventy-one percent of respondents said Girl Scouts was the first place they tried an outdoor activity, and half said they would not

have been able to participate in an outdoor activity if they were not in Girl Scouts.



Learn more about how you can get your daughter outdoors with Girl Scouts through resident camp

www.girlscoutshs.org/summercamp and special events!
www.girlscoutshs.org/calendar

www.girlscoutshs.org/summercamp

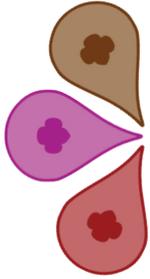
Benefits and Anticipated Outcomes of the Camp Experience

- Social Skills Development
- Leadership
- Communication
- Participation
- Self-Respect and Character Building
- Responsibility
- Resourcefulness
- Resilience
- Community Living/Service Skills
- Caring
- Fairness
- Citizenship
- Trustworthiness



Involving Kids in Family Vacation Planning

Jason Alderman, Vice President, Visa Inc.
Reprinted from Huff Post



Travel can be a great learning experience. Asking your kids to help research and execute arrangements on a future trip can be an even better one.

Learning about actual costs involved in the average family vacation can be an eye-opener for kids. By planning all or part of the trip, kids can gain an understanding of how to bargain hunt, budget and save money. Here are a few ideas to help involve the kids in family vacation planning:

Create a realistic budget. Share your vacation budget with your kids, and explain why it is set at that dollar amount. For example, you don't want to overspend because you're saving for home renovations later this year. Work together to create a more detailed budget for costs such as accommodations, transportation, food, special event tickets and souvenirs.

Map out your trip. Once you set your budget, have the kids investigate potential locations and their respective costs. A trip across the country might have high transportation costs but low accommodation costs. The kids can come up with a few different options. Also, research discount packages and other ways to save money.

Feed those piggy banks. Before the trip, teach your kids the importance of saving money by setting aside a portion of their allowance to help pay for their special purchases on the trip. Also, help them understand that if they would like to purchase souvenirs, they can save money to help pay for one of those items.

Plan for the unexpected. Help your kids plan a budget for a trip that is fun yet allows leeway for the unexpected. For instance, they might spot a new activity on the trip that's better than the one they budgeted for. If it's more expensive, they'll have to make a choice and determine how they'll get back on budget.

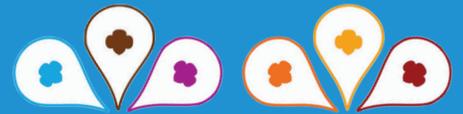
Have a smart discussion about credit. For older kids, particularly those who might already be using credit or debit cards under parental supervision, the trip is an opportunity for a more extensive lesson on using credit wisely. For example, explain that credit cards may provide more safety than cash when traveling, and that they offer theft and fraud protection.

Make travel planning a family tradition. When you return, discuss how you stuck to your budget and how you could improve next time. Consider starting a family vacation fund to help save for future holidays. Get your kids involved by having them set aside small contributions from their allowance funds.

Bottom line: Travel presents a great learning experience, especially in the planning and budgeting phases. Teaching kids the importance of making and sticking to a budget when traveling will help make them seasoned travelers in the future.

masthead photo p.1: GSHS Girl Scouts take a ride at Magic Springs Park in Hot Springs, AR as part of the Engineer Your Journey STEM program

right: Henry County Girl Scouts enjoy their trip to Savannah, GA, birthplace of Girl Scouts Founder, Juliette Gordon Low



Useful Websites for Traveling With Kids

FamilyFun.com is a Disney site with a plethora of travel advice and kid-friendly links. The site offers a vacation finder feature that allows you to enter a region (say, the Midwest) and a type of travel (like "hiking/backpacking" or "factory tours"), and get customized results. There's also useful information on beach vacations, camping trips and (of course!) theme park getaways.

Minitime.com provides detailed reviews of family-friendly hotels and resorts in the U.S., the Caribbean, Canada, Mexico and Europe. You'll also find reader tips, city guides and even a member photo gallery. Free registration is required to access parts of the site.

TravelWithYourKids.com has information on all aspects of family travel, including things to consider while planning a trip, how to keep the kids entertained on the plane and even how to find the places in the U.K. where the Harry Potter movies were filmed.

Ciao Bambino.com offers a searchable database of family-friendly hotels and resorts around the world, including ratings by age group (Baby Ready, Toddler Fun, School Age Action and Cool for Teens). Properties are reviewed by Ciao Bambino experts and by its community of parents. Also on the site are family travel tips, sightseeing recommendations and a blog.

Family Cruising: If you're considering a cruise for your next vacation, don't miss this resource page from **CruiseCritic.com**. Find out which ships and cruise lines are the most family-friendly, read up on on-board kids' programs, and learn how to choose shore excursions your children will love.