

SUN, FUN AND FAMILY



Sun, Fun and Family Strengthening

Summertime in Wisconsin can be full of family fun and adventure. Yet, filling the unstructured days of summer can also be stressful and overwhelming for both parents and kids. Here are some tools that can help families reduce the strain and increase the opportunities to create happy memories together. For more ideas of activities that you can do with your children, go to [FiveforFamilies.org](https://www.fiveforfamilies.org) and be sure to check out the Family Resource Center page to find an FRC near you.

Try to Maintain a Consistent Schedule

Children thrive when they have an established routine to follow. Though there will be times when sticking to a plan is impossible, creating some form of summer routine will be helpful for everyone.

- Keep dinner time, bedtime, and wakeup somewhat consistent even if it is later than during the school year.
- Add structure to your summer days. You can come up with daily themes like Friday Family Movie Night, Wednesday Evening Walk, Thursday Family Chore Day where each child is assigned an age-appropriate chore to complete.
- Keep kids and partners up to date on monthly, weekly, and daily plans (as appropriate for age) so everyone is on the same page, feels prepared, can give their input, and look forward to things.
- Changes to schedules and routines will be unavoidable. So, stay flexible and help other family members to be prepared to adjust also.

Finally, remind yourself that some of the best days happen when you throw the schedule out the window and let yourself be spontaneous. It's all about finding a balance that works well for your family.



- Communicate your expectations to summer childcare providers. If a parent is staying or working at home with kids present, talk about what each family member will need to do to help make things successful.
- Share rules for children's time use, freedoms, and restrictions.
- Share your expectations for your child's behavior toward siblings, parents, friends, and strangers.
- Consider safety issues that are more likely to occur in summer, when children may be less supervised, like sunburn, pool use or bike riding.

Make a Summer Bucket List

Find time to sit down as a family to make a list of fun things you want to do over the summer months. These can be simple things like popsicles outside, parks to see, library visits, and playing in or with water. You might also want to plan some bigger adventures like camping, planting a garden, or learning to ride a bike. As you prepare, keep these things in mind:

- Schedule in plenty of play time and family games.
- Keep kids active.
- Spends lots of time outdoors.
- Limit screen time.
- Encourage reading and listening to stories.

Establish Expectations and Summer Rules

It is important to plan for the changes in expectations and rules that summer brings for each family member.

Dealing with Big Feelings

The anticipation and expectations for summertime fun can bring both excitement and anxiety, which can be overwhelming for children. You can help kids recognize and manage their strong emotions by listening carefully, showing respect for their feelings, anticipating problems, and discussing past challenges and solutions. Practicing calming strategies, like deep breathing or counting to ten can also help. Ensuring that kids consistently eat well, drink water, and get enough rest will enhance their ability to manage those big feelings.

Caregivers are not immune from big feelings either. In the summer parents often feel pressure to juggle too much and make every activity fun and memorable. Expenses like summer camps, sports and vacations can add financial strain. The reality is that there will be bad days, failed plans, and that some activities will be too expensive for the family budget. Remember to take care of yourself and seek help when you need it. Practice self-forgiveness when you make a mistake. Let your kids be bored at times. Boredom can breed creativity. Plan for financial changes. Seek out free or low-cost activities and scholarships.