

Simple summer activities

Keeping children entertained during the summer can be fun and easy since time can be spent outside. Here are a few simple, inexpensive suggestions for spending time outside:

Sand Play: If you have a yard, or even a deck, water and sand play can entertain young children for hours. A large rectangular tub or two can be used for water and/or sand. Sandbox sand can be purchased from a hardware store. Household utensils can be used in the sand or water; cups, funnels, clear plastic bottles, spoons, colanders, plastic bowls - anything from which you can measure and pour. Add a little water and make sand castles. Draw pictures, make patterns, write letters and numbers. Bury small items and see how fast they can be found or how many objects can be found in 30 seconds. Small bulldozers or flat bottom boats make wonderful roads and paths. (Safety reminder: objects small enough to fit in a film can should not be used with children under three years of age as they pose a choking hazard.)

Water Play: Children love to play in water so fill up the pool or just a large tub and add cups, funnels and clear bottles. Collect rocks, sticks, leaves or toys and see what floats and what sinks. Add food coloring, dish detergent or bubble bath. In a tub, add bubble bath and give them an egg beater to make bubbles. Let the children wash their dolls and other water proof toys - they love doing this! Bring plastic furniture, tricycles and large toys outside and let them wash them with a bucket of soapy water. (Safety reminder: children can drown in less than four inches of water; never leave unsupervised when playing with water, even if in a tub.)

Games: If you have a yard or access to a park or playground have older children help you set up an obstacle course or activity stations. They can crawl under, climb over, and run around objects. They can bounce, throw, roll, kick a ball; run in place, hop on one foot, jump, walk backwards; carry a tennis ball on a spoon, jump rope. They can do the crab walk, three-legged race, sack races, wheelbarrow races. See how long they can keep a beach ball in the air. To keep the activities fun - time each of the children or team to see if they can improve their own time; not compete with each other. Adjust the activities to the age of the chil-

dren to make it easier for them to successfully participate.

Nature Kits: Give each child a box or bag to decorate. Collect "tools" for outdoor exploration and collecting of items: plastic magnifying glass, binoculars, clear plastic jars, clear plastic bags and a disposable camera. Older children could include a sketch pad and pencil. Organize scavenger hunts by drawing, describing or finding pictures of objects for the children to find. Have them find objects of a certain color, size, or shape. Do leaf rubbings by putting them under plain paper and rubbing the paper with the side of a crayon. Collect wildflowers and press between wax paper in heavy books. After they are dry, make bookmarks or cards. On a rainy day, put the collected hard objects in a sock or pillow case and see if the children can identify them by feeling them. Start a rock collection. Make a bird chart and see how many times the children see them throughout the summer. (Pictures can be downloaded from the Internet for projects.) Your local library will probably have books you can borrow to learn about birds, rocks and plants.

Have fun - summer in New Hampshire is short!

Information for this article was provided by Early Learning New Hampshire. The organization is committed to ensuring that all New Hampshire children have the opportunity to reach their full potential by expanding access to affordable quality child care and early education, supporting the child care industry; business public-private partnerships; and helping families balance work and family.

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