

## Cure Summer Blues with Summer Do's

School's out, they're home and you've checked off the summer To-Do's of camps, road trips and summer reading lists. One thing you haven't planned on is how to sharpen their critical thinking and academic skills. Get a head start on the next school year with a few neuron building activities that will engage and inspire the entire family. Your mission – to give them open-ended and self-generated activities that draw on higher level imagining, problem solving, documenting and producing skills.

### **Theme Week**

Pirates, Spies, Scientists, Artists, Explorers, Knights, Superheroes

Write each role on index cards and let your crew choose the week's theme on Sundays. Monday's activity can begin with a trip to the library or a search online for interesting background information. Tuesday – Arts and Crafts day, Wednesday Dress Up/Role Play (my personal favorite is “pirate speak”), Thursday - Fieldtrips (even to a local park or museum), Friday - compile scrapbooks, compose letters or create puppet shows. Saturday - Movie Night served up with a theme inspired family meal.

### **When is a lemonade stand not a lemonade stand?**

...When it's a math skill builder in disguise!

Measure, calculate, estimate, fraction, volume, yield, proportion. Even designing the stand logo requires an application of marketing and targeting strategies. Watch a few commercials together. Question. “How did they get your attention?” “How can you attract customers?”

### **Media Blitz**

A little TV and Video Games won't hurt – Think critically. If you watch the tube with your kids sneak in a question mid-show, have them predict the outcomes to episodes. Rent some old cliff hangers from your youth and ask the kids to come up with alternate endings. My 7 and 8 year olds are addicted to classic old-time radio dramas and comedies that can be downloaded for free. Historical context comes into play here, particularly when they ask about WWII references. I also had to explain why we couldn't send in Ovaltine proof of purchases for the latest Superman pins. Their obsession inspired them to invent dramatic cliff-hangers and record their version of radio commercials.

### **So what's it gonna cost me?**

Not much. Markers, paints, felt, glue – you probably already have these. Invest in unlined, “jumbo-sized” Post-it paper. Remember that summer is about bending the rules. Don't limit your kids to writing on the lines college rule style– let them post interesting ideas, observations, vocabulary or doodles on giant posters that can remain on their bedroom walls. Give them an old box to paint and design then create a diorama representing your weekend road trip.

