

Have a BEARY



Bradley Bear's Favorite Summer Survival Tips For Preschoolers!

Cool Summer!

To help preschoolers thrive during the hot summer months, focus on keeping a flexible routine that engages your child(ren), keeps them cool, hydrated, learning, and entertained.

When Planning Your Summer with Preschoolers and/or Older Children:

Solicit Your Child's Input (as much as possible)

It's important to have kids come up with suggestions of things they want to do. Having them make suggestions will encourage 'buy in' - helping them feel empowered and valued, while making them more inclined to want to do said activities. It will also help develop children's problem-solving skills and free thinking thereby encouraging self-motivation and initiative. Some other fun ideas, one day a month your child gets to be the parent or choose a menu, or select activities, etc.

Create Summer Routines

Children thrive on consistency and routines. Creating flexible daily/weekly/monthly schedules for your summer days helps keep young children (and even some adults) engaged and can help prevent boredom. Include a mix of fun activities, learning opportunities, and downtime, in your schedules. Don't forget to schedule bath time and bedtime routines and snuggles. A color-coded calendar posted on the wall can let family members know their daily schedules. Use pictures or countdown calendars to remind children of chores, activities, trips, and more.

Include Physical Activities in Your Schedule

Children and adults need daily exercise. Look for activities that your children can do with the adults in their lives. Consider swimming, paddling, biking, hiking, dancing, martial arts, yoga classes, walking the dog or your neighbor's dog, even ice skating are all great ways to exercise together.

Keep Everyone Learning

Even though your children are young, there's lots to learn in the summertime. Plant seeds or nursery plants in a flower garden or planter for picking and sharing with special people or just to decorate your house. Plant a vegetable garden. Teach the children about watering the plants each day. Point out shapes, colors, as you walk through your neighborhood. Play board games or games like I Spy. Create a cozy space where you can READ, READ, and READ some more. (The MoCo Public Libraries often have wonderful summer reading activities that encourage children to read lots of books.) Learn new summer songs. Cook up a storm in the kitchen (see index for recipes from cooking Stay + Play).

Daily Household & Family Chores

Include your child(ren) in helping you create summer fun. In order to get out and enjoy activities, getting ready comes first. Have your child pack the pool bag with towels. Use child safety knives and have them prep strawberries, grapes, watermelon, etc. for a picnic or just to replenish supplies in the refrigerator. Have children pair socks, sort laundry (this can be by color or size or t-shirts, pants, etc.) Children can set and clear the table. This is a great opportunity to practice counting and one-to-one correspondence. Loading and unloading child safe pieces into and out of the dishwasher is another way to help. Cooking, mixing, measuring, stirring, are all wonderful ways to engage your child in reading, math, and more. Create landing spots for shoes, dirty clothes, beach toys, wet towels, etc. and have the children make sure things are where they belong at the end of each day.

Set Limits on Screen Time

It can be very hard to get rid of screen time completely but it's important to set realistic limits for children. Consider planning screen-free days, or a screen-free week. Possibly limit your child's screen time to family movie nights. On car, plane, train trips play music and sing along or listen to audio books in place of screens. Using headphones in public places is a great way to listen to books, songs, etc.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends for children between the ages of 2 and 5 no more than 1 hour of quality screen time a day. The screen time should include active adult monitoring with the child. Also, there should be no screen time 1 to 2 hours before bedtime. A child's brain needs to calm down to be ready for sleep. However, video call and Facetime chats with friends, relatives, etc. do not count as screen time because they are interactive experiences. Whenever possible these calls should be 1 to 2 hours before bedtime.

Create a Boredom Jar

Write down several potentially fun activities your child may be interested in doing. Cut out each task, and place them in a jar labelled 'bored?' Any time they whine about having nothing to do they must randomly select a task, include chores in the jar too, and have your child do the task.

Create a Kindness Jar

Sometimes when there is too much family togetherness, disagreements arise. To encourage kindness, get a jar and some pom poms. Whenever someone does a kindness for someone else in the family they add a pom pom to the jar. When the jar is full there is a celebration, maybe a special pizza night, or staying late and having dinner at the pool, or a trip to the movies, etc.

Arrange for Reciprocal Playdates or Childcare

Look to nearby friends and family to help you out by offering to mind their children in exchange for them watching your child(ren) on alternate days or possibly weekends or even a week. Arrange playdates with similarly aged children or even past or future classmates. Our playgrounds are open to the community during the summer months.

How to Stay Cool

Spend time outdoors in the morning and late afternoon when it's cooler, and plan restful activities indoors during the hottest part of the day.

To survive the steamy summer heat, breathable clothing is vital! This includes shorts, tank tops, t-shirts, dresses, and footwear.

Water Play

Pools, sprinklers, baby pools, super soakers, water parks, and splash pads, are great ways to cool-off on summer's hottest days. Whether the kids are playing in your backyard or at a local water play location, playing in the water will cool them off and tire them out.

Long-sleeved bathing suits and swim shirts help prevent sunburn. For young children look for 2-piece bathing suits which are a lot easier to manage than one-piece suits when using the bathroom.

When planning outings and trips to the pool or other water play spaces, bring a dry set of clothes, including shoes packed in a waterproof bag. Bring waterproof bags to pack up wet and soiled clothing.

Include Time to Play in Shady Spaces

Access to shade for quieter activities, like sidewalk chalk and bubbles, nature walks in parks with lots of trees, reading stories under a tree, are great ways to pass the hottest hours of the day.

Plan Day Trips

Intersperse your summer routines with day trips. These planned activities can include trips to the zoo, museums, libraries, local nature centers and gardens, theatre in the woods at Wolf Trap or productions at Glen Echo or Imagination Stage, or even the grocery store or shopping mall. Day trips and special activities can break up the monotony of your summer days and create adventures everyone will enjoy and remember. Look for free events, festivals, and activities to enjoy.

Remember to Create Rainy Day or Quiet Time Activities

Encourage your children to use their imaginations – Create sensory bins or dramatic play bins. Give your child your junk mail, coupons, catalogs, old wrapping paper, newspaper, etc. and a pair of scissors to practice their cutting. Create a fort or campsite by throwing a blanket over a table. Set up a designated arts and crafts area in your home (or in the backyard) where kids can let their imaginations run wild. Stock it with supplies like paints, markers, paper, and clay, and encourage them to express themselves through art. Collect paper towels tubes, plastic tops, pipe cleaners, and more to create Makers Bins for hours of entertainment and creativity.

Creating Safe and Healthy Summer Habits:

Sun Safety

- Use sunscreen with at least SPF (sun protection factor) 15-30 and UVA (ultraviolet A) and UVB (ultraviolet B) protection every time you and your child go outside. Reapply every 30 minutes.
- Schedule outdoor activities carefully for morning and evening hours.
- Stay hydrated (see additional hydration resources below)
- Never leave infants, children, or pets in a parked car, even if the windows are cracked open.

Water Safety

- Supervise children closely in or around water and teach them basic water safety rules.
- Enroll your child in swimming classes to help them be more confident and safe in the water.
- Wear a properly fitted life jacket every time you and your loved ones are near water, especially lakes, rivers, oceans, pools, and other bodies of water.
- Always empty water from buckets and wading pools. Ponds, five-gallon buckets, and wading pools are drowning hazards for very young children.

Bike/Scooter/Tricycle Safety

- Your child should always wear a helmet when riding his/her bike.
- Be a proper role model and wear a helmet when you ride your bike.

Bug Safety

- Avoid scented soaps, perfumes, or hair sprays on your child.
- The current American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendation for insect repellent for children older than 2 months of age is use 10% to 30% DEET. DEET should not be used on children younger than 2 months of age.
- Cover up with long sleeved shirts, pants, and socks to reduce mosquito bites.

Be First Aid Ready

With more time outdoors, summer can bring more opportunities requiring first aid. Think bee stings, bug bites, cuts, scrapes, pool feet, bruises, and occasionally sunburn are part of summertime fun. Top up your first-aid kit and take it whenever you're out with your kids. Remember prevention is always better than cure!

Heatstroke Awareness

Be aware of the signs of heatstroke (dizziness, nausea, headache, and rapid breathing) and seek medical attention if needed.

Staying Hydrated During Hot Summer Months

Keep your child hydrated during the hot summer months, especially outdoors. Children are more susceptible to dehydration than adults, so making sure they drink enough throughout the day is important. Here are some tips to help you keep your child hydrated:

- Encourage your child to drink plenty of water throughout the day
- Avoid sugary drinks and soft drinks
- Offer your child fresh fruits and vegetables with high water content, such as watermelon, cucumber, or oranges
- Always take an insulated water bottle if you're going out
- Keep out of the sun as much as possible
- Watch your kids for signs of overheating or dehydration
- Freeze grapes cut in half and watermelon cubes for refreshing treats

Take snacks and picnics with you

Picnics are a great way to enjoy the outdoors with your child. Taking food with you allows you to decide what your kids will eat while you are out. Keep your food cool by packing it in an insulated cooler bag with an ice brick. Try to take a mix of food, including healthy choices. Here are some ideas:

- Sliced fruits such as bananas, watermelons, apples, strawberries, grapes cut in half and frozen, pears
- Small pieces of cheese or cheese sticks
- Whole-grain crackers
- Hummus
- Yogurt with fresh berries or whole grain cereal
- Hard-boiled egg
- Carrot sticks (lightly cooked for young toddlers), cucumber slices, celery sticks
- Homemade or store-bought muffins, little pancakes or waffles
- Small sandwiches with whole-grain bread and fillings like lean meat, cheese, and peanut butter

Hydration Popsicles

Invest in popsicles or in popsicle molds and make them yourself. There is nothing like watching your kids enjoy an icy treat in the hot summer sun. It teaches them speed and efficiency on how to take full advantage of eating the whole popsicle as opposed to having half of it melt on them.

When all else fails:

Send Children to Visit Their Favorite Relatives

Grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends, with or without the same aged children often are happy to spend a few days with your children.

For several of the items mentioned in this document, quick Google searches can provide more information and suggestions. For example, look up how to create a Maker's Space or appropriate board games for my 4-year-old who loves counting, or how to implement a Kindness Jar with your family, or homemade popsicle recipes, etc.

Favorite Cooking Stay + Play Recipes:

[Bears in a Blanket](#)

[Blueberry Muffins](#)

[Brownies](#)

[Cheesy Breadsticks](#)

[Chocolate Lava Cake](#)

[French Toast](#)

[Ham and Cheese Roll Ups](#)

[Pigs in a Blanket](#)

[Pancakes](#)

[Scrambled Eggs](#)

[Smashed Broccoli with Cheese](#)

[Zucchini Fries](#)

Local Indoor Resources/Activities:

[Imagination Stage](#)

[Baltimore Aquarium](#)

[MD Science Center](#)

[KID Museum](#)

[National Children's Museum](#)

[Little Towns Children's Museum](#)

[Port Discovery](#)

[Smithsonian Museums](#)

[My Gym](#)

[Dynamite Gymnastics](#)

[Zava Zone](#)

[Sky Zone](#)

Montgomery County Libraries:

Check out unique features of Montgomery County's children's libraries, story times, and craft events at many of the local children's libraries. Some of our favorites are:

[Noyes Library](#)

[Potomac Library](#)

[Bethesda Library](#)

[Davis Library](#)

[Chevy Chase Library](#)

[Little Falls](#)

Local Outdoor Resources/Activities:

[Strathmore Concerts on the Lawn](#)

[Butterfly Garden at Brookside](#)

[Local Nature Center Activities](#)

[Glen Echo – Aquarium & Merry Go Round](#)

[C & O Canal Walks/Waterfall](#)

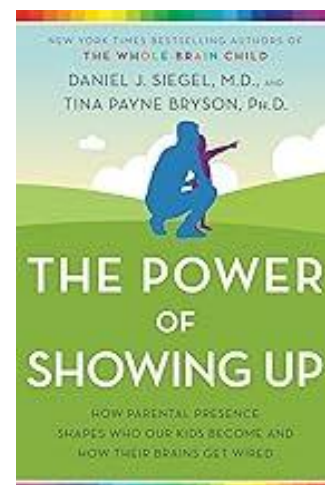
[Botanical Gardens](#)

[Cabin John Regional Park & Train](#)

[Smithsonian Zoo](#)

Parent Reading Suggestion from Beth Frook, Little Hands Music, Early Childhood Educator, Teacher Mentor/Trainer, parent of 3, grandparent of 4

“Safe-Seen-Soothed-Secure” a review of The Power of Showing Up, How Parental Presence Shapes Who Our Kids Become and How Their Brains Get Wired, by Daniel J. Siegel, MD and Tina Payne Bryson, PhD



In this accessible, well-researched book, Drs Siegel and Bryson emphasize that showing up doesn't require a lot of time or resources... and the benefits to our children's healthy development and secure attachment are huge. Children are hard-wired for connection and are uniquely tuned in to and reliant on their caregivers for physical and emotional survival. They need to "borrow our calm" to regulate when things get too big in their emotional world. When we are not only physically present, but also emotionally available, listening, and providing support in times of distress, we can create an environment for children that fosters security in their relationships, tolerance, self-regulation, and resilience as they grow.

So how do we "show up?" Siegel and Bryson use the Four S's as a handy way to break it down:

- **Safe**

Providing a secure and predictable environment where children feel protected and can explore without fear. We can't always insulate a child from injury or avoid doing something that leads to hurt feelings. But when we give a child a sense of safe harbor, she will be able to take the needed risks for growth and change.

- **Seen**

Paying attention to a child's emotions and understanding their perspective, demonstrating that their feelings are valid. Truly seeing a child means we pay attention to his emotions—both positive and negative—and strive to attune to what's happening in his mind beneath his behavior.

- **Soothed**

Helping children cope with challenging emotions and providing support in times of distress. Soothing isn't about providing a life of ease; it's about teaching your child how to cope when life gets hard and showing him that you'll be there with him along the way. A soothed child knows that he'll never have to suffer alone.

- **Secure**

Building a strong bond through consistent and reliable presence, creating a sense of trust and security. When a child knows she can count on you, time and again, to show up—when you reliably provide safety, focus on seeing her, and soothe her in times of need, she will trust in a feeling of secure attachment. And thrive!