

Only a few more months until summer. The good news: You have a few more months to figure things out. Maybe you look forward to the summer season in some ways: less nagging about homework, fewer chauffeur duties for sports practices and other activities. At the same time, summers can be challenging. Each week's schedule may be different, requiring you to do more planning around logistics.

If camp or summer programs are part of your family's plan, you need to register in advance—often way in advance for specialty ADHD camps or summer programs. Camps can be quite expensive, however. Summer camp, especially for multiple weeks, may be beyond the family budget. Good alternatives do exist, and I'll talk about some of those below.

### What do I do if all the camps are now full?

Get your child on a camp's waitlist if they have one. Don't count on this working out, however; actively pursue other options. Check in every week to see where your child is on the waitlist. This will give you a sense of whether the list is moving and what the likelihood is that your child could get admitted. In the meantime, here are some good next steps.

- Look for niche or specialized camps (such as coding, drama, or specific sports), which often have later registration deadlines and do not fill quite as quickly.
- Consider camp programs affiliated with local aftercare companies or those connected with your child's school.
- Check out the summer programs offered by your local parks and recreation department.

- Broaden your geographic search if you are willing to drive farther each day. Another possibility would be having your child participate in a camp or program near a relative's home where you can stay for the week.
- Consider sleepaway camp if feasible financially and if your child is interested.
- Based on the cancellation policies, grab open slots for camps that are likely to work and get the weeks covered that you can.
- Start creating a backup plan for other weeks by organizing activities with parents of your child's friends who are available for the same weeks. Text chains with other parents can be a great way to communicate about open camp slots and can help you see who else is looking for activities for a given summer week.

### What if our family cannot afford camp for any or many weeks?

Let's face it: Camps can be expensive, and the cost may seem daunting if you have not already budgeted for it, whether your child attends public or private school. Here are a few ideas to consider for approaching this expense.

- Figure out a total budget that is feasible for camp per child.
- See how many weeks that budget would cover based on the specific camps you choose.
- Perhaps your child could attend a more expensive camp for one or two weeks and a less expensive option for one or more of the other weeks (such as a typical YMCA or local pool camp).
- For weeks when covering camp is not feasible, map out a plan of what you will do.

## What are some alternative options to camp?

Here are some ideas to consider as ways to cover non-camp weeks.

- Organize planned activities with a group of your child's friends and their parents (for the week or weeks). Each parent could take responsibility for a day or a half-day at a time (based on how many kids there are). Each parent should figure out what works with their work schedule or the needs of their families.
- Take a trip to visit relatives or friends for the week.
- If your work schedule is flexible, condense it. Take the morning or afternoon off (or even 3 PM onwards into the evening) and do activities with your kids. If this option works for you, you can set up other activities for them to enjoy during the block of hours when you are working.
- Enroll your kids in an online camp or self-paced course to engage them while you work.
- Identify projects at home that are long overdue—such as your child organizing their room, organizing the garage, pantry, and so forth. If age-appropriate and feasible, get your child started on these projects and help them break the tasks down into parts. Perhaps they can do specific portions independently while you are at work or working.

## What if my child is usually unwilling to go to camp?

On a practical level, having a conversation about why can help determine if there are parameters that can lessen your child's resistance and increase their willingness to attend camp. Common concerns include:

- Not having friends there or not knowing anyone
- Not liking certain activities
- Preferring to be at home
- To help your child be more willing to go to camp, consider:
  - Getting information from the child about what they want in a camp if they have to go
  - Including them in the initial research and looking at camps
  - Giving them three options to choose from so they have some say
  - Giving them an occasional week off of camp, if possible
  - Trying to coordinate camps with friends


## What can we do when we're managing without organized summer activities?

Let's talk about strategies for the days or weeks when your child will be home and it isn't an option to make plans with friends and their parents. You can bring some structure to those days with the help of these tools.

**Three Daily Anchors.** Use this strategy to structure the day without a rigid school-like schedule.

- Anchor 1: Consistent wakeup and breakfast time
- Anchor 2: One "Out of House" activity (even just a walk)
- Anchor 3: One "Contribution" (chore or skill-building activity; could be summer homework)

**Boredom Busters.** How can you deal with "I'm bored?" You may hear these words on repeat if your child is home all day, and they are among the most annoying. It probably doesn't matter how many toys or games they have or if you've suggested a million things they can do. If your child cannot be self-motivated to identify and engage in an activity, almost anything you suggest may be met with rejection. But here are a few phrases you can use to encourage them toward their own choices:

- "I have total faith in your imagination—I can't wait to see what you come up with!"
- "Boredom is just an invitation for a new adventure; you'll figure out something great."
- "I trust your brain to find something fun to do. Let me know what you decide!"
- "That sounds like a great chance to be creative. I'm sure you'll find something you love."
- "I know you're great at finding fun things to do—have a blast with whatever you choose!" 



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## SAMPLE SUMMER SCHEDULE

### Bert's Summer Schedule

*Here is a sample schedule one parent developed for her son.*

- **Week of June 15:** Schedule plans with friends. Coordinate with other parents to take turns watching the group of kids based on everyone's work schedules.
- **Week of June 22:** Baseball Camp
- **Week of June 29:** Need to find something cheap or free.
- **Week of July 6:** Local YMCA Camp
- **Week of July 13:** Too expensive to attend camp this week; figure something out.
- **Week of July 20:** Week with relatives out of town; final plans TBD.
- **Week of July 27:** Soccer Camp
- **Week of August 3:** Family vacation of some kind
- **Week of August 10:** "Camp Grandma"
- **Week of August 17:** Coordinate plans with friends and other parents.
- **Week of August 24:** We survived! School starts again!