

EXPECT SUCCESS



ALL THAT (NOT SO) WASTED TIME

"Some of the best memories are made in flip flops."

I love music so when I think of summer, many songs come to mind. One that sticks with me is Keith Urban's *Wasted Time* when he sings *"ain't it funny how the best days of my life, was all that wasted time."* Looking back on my own childhood I realize that, just like kids today, we lived for the summer months of shorts and tank tops, hours spent swimming, lemonade stand profits to buy fireworks and night time campfires. Some things are timeless.



On the surface, those things feel like wasted time. We even refer to them as the "lazy days of summer," but I would argue that the summer months are great for rejuvenation and a whole lot of learning that doesn't always fit into the school year curriculum. I could give it a fancy name of "Summer Curriculum" but really it's "Life Curriculum." In childhood, all our wasted time was really spent learning how to get along with others and resolve differences in the pick-up baseball game when someone cheated on the rules. It was spent figuring out profit margins in our lemonade stand when we drank as much as we sold. It was spent exercising endlessly (without being told) because we rode our bikes all over town. It was spent learning how to entertain ourselves because complaints of "I'm bored" were often met with "go outside and find something to do." When we got older, it was spent hanging out with friends recalling school year stories and laughing around a campfire or at the beach until late into the night (nowadays we would call that practicing good social skills as we learned to listen and reflect). I would have to agree with Keith Urban, many of the best days of my life have been all that "wasted time."

Heading into the summer, I am sharing a list of activities that may feel like "wasted time" but still have a lot of life learning. Enjoy!

Ways to Enjoy the Lazy Days of Summer

-  **Have summer picnics.** You don't have to go far to make it fun. Planning and making the food together is just as important as eating together. When my kids were young it was simply cheese cubes, crackers, grapes and apple slices on a blanket under a tree. Take along a few favorite books to read aloud and you've slipped in some quality reading time.
-  **Make use of the car rides.** There is a lot of time spent in the car going on vacations, driving to ball games, even to the grocery store. Play all the old games we used to play (before technology) such as I Spy, Twenty Questions, License Plate Game (numbers or letters), I'm Going on a Trip and I'm Bringing..." When my kids got older and didn't want to play some of those games, I tricked them into writing my grocery list to practice spelling or quizzed them on their math facts.
-  **Go stargazing.** You don't have to have an expensive telescope to enjoy the night sky. In fact, a quick trip to the public library for some constellation books promotes summer reading and great learning. Pair your book with a cool free astronomy app (Night Sky or Star Chart) on your cell phone or iPad and you will be able to identify multiple constellations. Pack a blanket and some snacks and you are set to go. You may have a budding astronomer in the family!
-  **Attend a summer parade.** Parades are often hidden gems of cultural experience. Because parades are typically held for some type of celebration, you have a built in lesson on a major holiday or community's culture. The entries are always fascinating because you have everything from marching bands and fire trucks to horses, tractors and funny clowns. Lots to see and lots to talk about.
-  **Invest in some water fun.** In the summer, everything becomes more fun if getting wet is part of the play. For younger kids, cheap hose attachments or a small pool can provide days of fun. As my kids got older, I invested in some sheet plastic from the hardware store and created a giant slip-n-slide. Regardless of age, the Savannah Park splash pad is a great spot to cool off.
-  **Walk, Walk, Walk.** It's good for your health and your kids' health too. After long winter months and a rainy spring, we finally have great outdoor weather. Start a summer routine where you plan a family walk two or three nights a week. (As my kids got older, we named them "night walks" to make them sound more exciting.) While the physical and mental health benefits are fantastic, kids will just enjoy spending time outside with you which is a lifelong benefit.