

- ✓ Ideas for great days out
- ✓ Suggestions for working parents

**PARENT
KNOW
HOW**

What to do in the **school holidays**

department for
education and skills



AT A GLANCE

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How to keep your children busy and active during the school holidays

- Local schools may offer holiday play schemes in your area.
- Many museums, galleries and science centres have free activities for children.
- If you are working, you may need to arrange holiday childcare with grandparents, other relatives or a registered child carer.
- Residential holiday camps are available that include special activities, such as sport, art and crafts, or camping trips.
- Keep your children safe by reminding them of what to do if they get lost or run into problems.

Did you know?

Internet access is available in every public library, so your children can surf there whenever they like.

Making summer holidays fun and productive

Most people look forward to taking a holiday. But if you work and have kids, school holidays may be one of the most difficult times of the year for you.

Lots of parents face the same challenges. And even if you can take time off or don't work during the school holidays, it can be an uphill struggle to get children away from that TV and out doing something active and interesting.

That's what this booklet is about. It will help you to:

- find out what holiday childcare is available in your area**
- learn about out-of-school clubs, play schemes, holiday camps and holiday programmes**
- find out about holiday activities at museums, galleries and science centres**
- remind your children about how to keep safe during the holidays**
- find more information about holiday events and activities.**

Ideas for working parents

Naturally, you want your children to enjoy their school holidays, even if you can't be with them all the time. So, what are your options?

Family and friends

Many families get some help from grandparents and other relatives. Often children can spend time at a relative's house in another part of the country and enjoy different surroundings and activities. You may also be able to make arrangements to 'swap' children with friends or to share existing or new childcare arrangements.

Help from your local school

More schools are being encouraged to extend the range of activities and services they offer to meet children's, young people's and parents' needs. Many schools already run play schemes during the holidays, normally between 8.30am and 6pm. These play schemes offer holiday childcare that doesn't cost too much. The schemes are designed for children between the ages of five and 11, although some cater for older children.

The schemes on offer in or around each school will vary and you should check with your school about what's available. The play schemes allow groups of children to take part in a range of organised activities, which might include:

- sport
- art
- crafts
- outings.

Holiday camps

There are a number of organisations that offer holiday camps for children. Some of these are residential, while others are day camps. Often these camps offer special activities, such as canoeing, horseback riding, swimming and a range of sports, as well as art and crafts activities and camping trips.

Thinking about going to a holiday camp?

The British Activity Holiday Association gives a list of companies that specialise in children's holiday activities. Some holiday activities are for families and others are for children only. See the back page for more details.

Spending time with your children

If you can take time off work or are a stay-at-home parent, school holidays can be a good time to plan outings with children. There are lots of activities – both indoor and outdoor – to choose from:

- Museums and galleries run special events or programmes during the holidays, usually on a daily basis. Most major museums and galleries have free entry.
- Days out at the beach, in the country or visiting heritage sites, such as stately homes or castles, can be good fun for everyone. Most do not cost too much either.

- Plan trips to amusement parks and adventure playgrounds. Visit your local swimming pool, play in the park or go bicycling.
- Visit your local library – special events may be held there and you can surf the internet if you don't have a computer at home.
- Spend time reading together and working on projects that you set for yourselves, such as making a scrapbook of what the kids have been up to during their holiday.

The Summer Reading Challenge gets children of all ages involved in reading over the school holidays. Over 600,000 four to 12-year-olds take part each year at public libraries all over the country.

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Keeping your children safe

During the summer holidays, you and your children may not be taking familiar journeys or following normal routines. At the beginning of the holiday, it may be worth sitting down together and setting out some basic rules and procedures in case your children find themselves in unfamiliar situations.

Planning a family holiday?

If you are planning a family trip, make sure it happens during the school holidays. It's probably best not to expect your child's school to agree to a family holiday during term time, as it may say no. Generally, schools will not agree to your child missing more than a total of 10 school days for family holidays in any one school year, unless there is a very good reason.

Practical tips

- **Finding each other** When you are out visiting places, always arrange a meeting point in case someone gets lost.
- **Playing with friends** Make sure your children tell you where they are going and arrange a time for them to be home. Explain that it's for their safety, not because you're trying to ruin their fun.
- **Public transport** Make sure you all travel together in the same train carriage, or have seats close together on a bus or coach. If your children are travelling on their own, ask them to sit near other families.
- **Public toilets** Always go with your children into public toilets. If they'll be on their own or with friends, make sure they know not to talk to strangers.
- **Lifts** Suggest to your children that they only use lifts with friends. Tell them not to feel worried about getting out if they feel uncomfortable about someone else being in there.
- **Mobile phones** If your children have mobiles, make sure they don't show them off – they could be mugged for them.

- **Emergency money** If your children are making their own way home from after school clubs or playing with friends, make sure they always have some emergency money that can be used to phone you, or get a bus rather than walk.
- **Your telephone numbers** Make sure your children know, or have a list of, all your telephone numbers so that they, or other adults, can get in contact with you.
- **Be safe, be seen** If your children are cycling or walking home in the dark, make sure they have lights or a torch and a coat or shoes with reflective strips on. They should wear helmets when cycling.
- **Internet safety** Internet access at public libraries is protected, so that children can't find their way onto dangerous websites. But when they are using the internet at home or friends' houses, make sure they are aware of the potential dangers of making friends in internet chat rooms. You might want to take advantage of your internet service provider's parental control facilities.

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Want to find out more?

If you would like to know more about school holiday childcare or events at museums and galleries, check out these websites:

www.culture.gov.uk/breakout

www.bbc.co.uk/parenting

www.childcarelink.gov.uk, for childcare options in your area

www.24hourmuseum.org.uk

www.show.me.uk

www.youthartsonline.org

www.cultureonline.gov.uk

If you're thinking of going to a holiday camp or sending your child to one, try the British Activity Holiday Association at www.baha.org.uk

Can't get onto the internet at home?

Visit your local library which will have computers and internet access.

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