

# Mummy, I'm bored!

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Want to beat boredom without feeling stressed out? Here are some tips to help kids have a blast this summer

In this era of 'staying ahead' where the Class 12 syllabus is covered in Class 11 and toddlers just as they begin to spout monosyllables are taught to parrot in 'English', the summer vacation comes as a great obligation to parents. It seems as though they will fail entirely in their duties as parents if they do not provide adequate 'occupation' to their children during these two months. So much before the vacation, parents are seen making enquiries and rushing about filling forms for summer camps, sports coaching, and more. It is advisable to use time constructively but the mad race of 'staying ahead' puts children to tremendous mental stress that they may never be able to shake off for life. No wonder then that in spite of all our efforts to keep them 'occupied' there is no escape from the dreaded, 'Mummy, I'm bored' or 'Dad, I've nothing to do'. The fast pace of our lives - computer games, instant foods and instant idols - reflects on our kids who tire of activities sooner than ever. Parents, especially those who are not able to give too much time to their kids, try to compensate for it by buying them every advantage they can afford. So they stuff their days with art, music, sports, and self-development courses. The kids get so used to rushing from one activity to another that when they do have a free moment they balk. They do not know what to do with themselves. Children also say they're bored when they want attention or when the activity they are doing is too difficult for them or not challenging enough. Parents often run out of ideas and the repeated 'Draw something' or 'Colour something' soon begins to sound like a punishment. While it is not fair to compare their world to 'our good ol'days', it is good to try and bring in some old-fashioned charm into their lives. To let them laze about, play invented games, look for elephants in the clouds, and just enjoy their summer vacation. Learning does not have to come only from books, camps or classes. Here are some ideas.

**Invent games** Encourage them to invent their own games. A cushion house or a saree tent, a mud cake will fire their creativity and imagination more than a computer game ever will.

**Growing plants** Help them select and plant easy-to-grow vegetables like tomatoes, chillies, coriander or seasonal flowers in pots. They can plant seeds in flowerbeds to form their initials or some other pattern. The close eye to the development of the plants inculcates the sense of wonderment so essential to be able to appreciate the natural world.

**Letter writing** It is a lost art yet all of us feel so happy when we receive a physical letter. Encourage them to write letters to grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and friends. They can also write to their favourite authors, film and sports stars, and letters to editors. This will help them articulate their feelings, ideas and opinions.

**Art** All kids love art and crafts. What kills their interest is what becomes of their work. The stacks and

stacks of completed colouring and drawing books lie unopened in cupboards. One wall in the house should be reserved for displaying their paintings and artwork. Also, help them create some useful art - bookmarks, greeting cards (that can be used throughout the year), collages of family photos that can be displayed. Try innovative ideas like using dried, pressed flowers and leaves, pencil shavings, wool and grains to create these.

**Needlework and knitting** These build up patience. Children can create simple items like an embroidered tray cover, a pair of knitted booties, a crochet stole, a patchwork sling bag. It also gives them a sense of accomplishment.

**Newspaper reading:** Help them acquire the habit of reading the newspaper. Over meals, the news stories can be discussed. This will help them develop a sense of the world beyond, to organise their thoughts and energise their curiosity about the world. Ask them to underline the new words they come across in the newspaper. Teach them the use of the dictionary.

**Visit the library** Get them their own library cards. Help them look up the catalogues. Let them choose the books they want to read. They will make mistakes but they will learn quicker.

**Household chores** Draw them into household chores as appropriate to their ages. They should be involved in simple tasks such as laying and clearing the dining table, answering the door, watering the plants, making their own beds, etc.

**Sightseeing** A weekly trip to local sightseeing spots like gardens, museums, historical sites can be organised along with other kids in the neighbourhood or other friends. Joint trips will make the experience more enjoyable for the children.

**Physical exercise** Beside all this, some form of physical exercise should be compulsory each day. If a game of badminton, basketball, or a swim is not possible, let them at least run a couple of rounds around the block in the morning. Limit their television watching to a couple of programmes a day.

But the trick is not to impose anything on an unwilling child. Talk to them about what they would like to do; then list their preferences before planning the activities.

Remember the most precious thing you can give your child this summer is your time and companionship. Have a blast!

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