



Summer Activities for Fun and Learning

Children eagerly look forward to summer vacation only to complain about being bored after a few weeks (or days)! You can help your child overcome summer boredom by being prepared with a variety of activities that are both fun and educational. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Play Office

Required:

- Small Table or Cardboard Box
- Junk Mail
- Crayons, Markers
- Toy Telephone
- Shoe Boxes
- Office Accessories



First, you'll need a desk. If you have a kid-sized table, place a couple of shoe boxes at the back edge. These can be in- or out-trays. If you don't have a table, an upright sturdy cardboard box will do. Save a few days worth of junk mail — this could be important correspondence for your junior executive — and place it in the in- and out-trays.

Provide crayons, markers, scratch paper, an old checkbook, tape, a calculator, an appointment book, and anything else that can be safely used by your budding executive.

Want to go higher tech? Make a computer out of a cardboard box. Draw a screen with markers or crayons, cut a slot at the bottom (for disk drive), then make up some cardboard diskettes. For a keyboard, find a piece of cardboard about two feet long and eight inches wide; draw in keys. Anything else? A telephone, of course. Now stop by for some business talk. Maybe even a power lunch.

[Back | Table of Contents](#)

Easy Bird Feeder

Required:

- Half-Gallon Milk or Juice Container
- Stapler/Staples
- Tape
- Chopstick or Unsharpened Pencil
- Wire
- Pipe Cleaners
- Birdseed



Your children will get a kick out of seeing birds dine in their backyard—especially out of a homemade feeder!

Close and staple together the spout of a half-gallon milk or juice container. Seal the whole top edge with tape, and then punch a small hole about a quarter of an inch from the top. Place a wire or pipe cleaner ring through the hole.

Set the carton upright, then cut two small holes about an inch and a half from the bottom on opposite sides. (Remember that cutting is a grown-up's job.) Poke either a chopstick or unsharpened pencil through the holes, so it sticks out on both sides. This is the perch. One-half inch above the perch on each side, cut a two-inch flap that swings up. Fasten the flap in the open position with a wire or pipe cleaner.

Use a funnel to pour birdseed into the flap opening. (You can get birdseed at your local garden or hardware store; if you have a favorite type of bird, go to the library to learn what kind of feed it likes best.) Hang the bird feeder by attaching a wire from the loop in the top of the feeder to a tree branch.

Sock Puppets

Required:

- Old Socks
- Markers
- Pipe Cleaners
- Yarn
- Felt
- Cotton Balls



Collect a few socks headed for the rag bag, then create faces with markers and common household materials like yarn, felt, cotton, or pipe cleaners. Push in the toe end to create a mouth so your kids can make the puppets talk.

Once you've made the puppets, construct a simple "theater" by draping a sheet or blanket over several chairs. The puppeteer hides behind the blanket and raises his or her hand(s) so the audience can watch the puppets in action.

Ant Farm

Required:

- Two Containers
- Soil
- Ants
- Jam, Cereal, or Candy for Ants



All you need is a clear, large, wide-mouth plastic container and a smaller plastic container or drinking glass that fits inside, leaving a space about one-half to three-quarters of an inch wide. Careful—if the space is too wide, you won't be able to see the tunnels.

Fill up the area between the two containers with dirt, tapping gently. Add ants from your garden or back yard, and place a screen over the top for air. (If you can dig up a queen ant—she's larger—you'll extend the life of the ant farm.) Every few days, drop in a bit of candy, jam, or fruit-sweetened cereal. In a week or so, you should have a top-notch tunneling operation.

When your child has finished observing the ant farm, have him or her release the inhabitants back into the yard—their natural habitat. This is a good way to foster respect for all the critters on the planet.

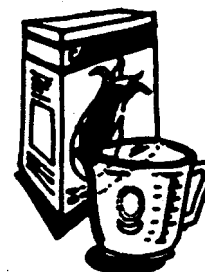
Oblique

Required:

- Cornstarch
- Water Tub or Dishpan

Optional:

- Food Coloring
- Kitchen Utensils



Imagine the perfect play glop—non-toxic, easy to make, easy to clean, and hours of fun. Look no further than your pantry. All you have to do is mix cornstarch and water in the right proportions. The resulting "oblique" is a unique play material; the surface is hard and crusty, but scoop it up and it's fluid enough to pass through a strainer. As your kids mush the oblique between their fingers, it continually changes from hard to semi-liquid, almost magically.

To make your own oblique, simply add two parts cornstarch and one part water (example: 2 cups cornstarch and 1 cup of water) in a tub or dishpan. Stir the mixture until it begins to thicken.

Check with your local library for books and other resources on summer activities for children. The library may also offer special summer programs for school-age children!

Now let the rumpus begin. Supply your kids with spoons, plastic shovels, funnels or various kitchen utensils (you can clean them with soap and water afterwards). To create unusual effects, let your kids swirl in a teaspoon or two of different food colorings. Whatever variations you try, the oblique will endlessly transform in shape and texture, providing non-stop entertainment.

Source: 365 TV-Free Activities You Can Do With Your Children, Steve and Ruth Bennett, 1996.

Author: Elaine Collins, Extension Agent—Family & Consumer Sciences/Community Development, Adams County

Edited By: Rose Fisher Merkwitz, Extension Agent—Family & Consumer Sciences/Community Development, Highland County

Kathy Jelley, Extension Agent—Family & Consumer Sciences, Brown County

Carol Ford Arkin, Extension Specialist—Family Life, Ohio State University

All educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, age, disability or Vietnam-era veteran status.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Keith L. Smith, Director, Ohio State University Extension.

TDD # 1 (800) 589-8292 (Ohio only) or (614) 292-1868

11/97—200—des