

The Internet is a great resource for finding activities for kids

By Bruce A. Love

Summertime is officially here, and kids have been home for several weeks. If you have young ones, you have probably heard, "There's nothing to do!" Children have become so accustomed to structured schedules and learning that many don't know they can initiate interesting activities with little or no outside help. Of course, it can be fun to discover and learn things with a teacher, parent, or co-conspirator, but there is something to be said for quiet times when a child can explore their own potential and interests.

If you are not the creative type, have no fear. There are plenty of resources available for you and your children. The local library is always a good place to start. When you take your child to the library in search of books they can read (or ones you can read to them), also browse the many age-appropriate activity books. With any activity you find for kids, make sure they are challenging, yet doable. The idea is for them to work at something on their own and to give you time to work on projects you want to do.

The Tot Spot Enrichment Program at Trinity United Methodist Church in Roaring Spring has allowed my wife and her cohorts to infect many impressionable minds with creative ideas. Since launching this new program, the four and five year olds have participated in many fun activities, and taken home the knowledge, confidence, and drive to try things on their own (with parental supervision). There are many web sites dedicated to providing information about activities for children. My wife has located information online on every craft imaginable. The following are some great web sites to find projects that kids will love!

When I was a kid, I assumed that "Play-Doh" and "Silly Putty" had to come from a store. Technically, this is correct, but there are some recipes online that approximate these time-tested favorites. Visit www.momsmarketonline.com/craft-recipes.html to find recipes for these kid pleasers, along with recipes for clay, bubble bath, giant soap bubbles, facepaint, and even edible finger-paints!

Search for crafts and activities by topic or occasion at www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts. Here, you can

download step-by-step instructions for projects relating to the Fourth of July, dinosaurs, Native Americans, and many other categories. Enchanted Learning also offers simple instructions for how to make Origami, Dream Catchers, and candles. For more challenging Origami, try www.origami.com, and click on the diagram link. It is truly amazing what some people can do with a piece of paper!

If your children are pre-school age, you can't go wrong with coloring pages. If you are unable to get out to a store for coloring books, try www.freecoloringpages.com. In addition to providing many coloring pages on their own web site, there are links to other Web sites offering free coloring pages featuring Winnie the Pooh, TeleTubbies, Veggitalles, and many other favorites! Just print these pages in black and white, and allow the kids to add the color!

Older children may enjoy in making innovative paper airplanes (www.bestpaperairplanes.com) or learning how to draw animals using step-by-step instructions (www.drawsketch.about.com). Beading is popular with kids of all ages, and is one of those activities that can occupy a child for many hours. It also allows your child to experiment with color and texture, and discover what combinations they like. The bracelets and necklaces they make can be wonderful presents for friends and family members. Visit www.kidsdomain.com/craft for beading ideas and many other craft ideas for kids.

Kids love parties in the summertime (and just about any other time). One thing we frequently had at our summer parties was a piñata. These colorful paper mache animals can easily be made by older children. Visit www.about.com and search for piñatas to find paste recipes and ideas for these colorful party favorites!

You can find information about any kid's craft you can imagine online. Just go to Google or Yahoo, and type in "Kids" and the name of the craft. If you want a recipe, enter (for example) "bubbles recipe." The Internet is the fastest way to find ideas, instructions, pictures, and diagrams to satisfy the creative needs of even the most "bored" child!

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