

Family Glue: Ideas for Year-Round Family Fun

It's important that children spend time with their families.

Naturally, children enjoy spending time with their friends. This is a normal part of growing up. But family time is important, too — even when teens rebel against being seen with their parents. All children need some good and happy times with their families.

Special times spent with family members are like “family glue.”

They help bond the family together. Spending time together as a family takes planning, but it's a good investment. When children feel close to their parents, they try harder to please their parents and make them proud. This makes the whole family unit stronger.



It isn't difficult to have family fun.

It doesn't require a lot of time or a lot of money. Simple pleasures, shared with everyone, will be remembered long after fancy trips or expensive games.

The activities in this newsletter have been selected so that everyone in the family — from young children to family elders (grandparents, great-aunts, and great-uncles) — can be included with only a little planning for their special needs. You will be able to think of many other activities which can be enjoyed by your whole family for little or no cost. Just ask yourself, “What can we do to have fun together?”

Have family fun at home

Try reading aloud for 1/2 hour one or two evenings a week.

There are many books that can be enjoyed by both adults and children. Ask adults and older children to take turns being the reader.

Help plant a community garden.

Besides saving money and improving your family's health, you can all have a good time working in the garden together and watching your efforts grow. Give family members their own small plot to plan and plant whatever they want.

Have a “special” meal once a week.

Let everyone get involved in planning and preparing the meal.

Get out those games.

Have a good old-fashioned Monopoly marathon, or try Scrabble, with special rules for young spellers. Learn some card games that children and adults will have fun playing.



Share your evening with friends.

A glass of lemonade or iced tea, popcorn and conversation can be as much fun as an elaborate party. Ask friends to bring their children and let them all play together.

Make holidays and birthdays extra special family days.

Encourage family members to make gifts for each other rather than buying gifts. Plan a party for decorating the table at Thanksgiving or for making Valentine treats.

Build a snow fort or a snowman together.

Show your children how to make snow angels. Go sledding together. Take a walk in the snow.

Build a birdhouse, bird feeder or squirrel feeder out of a used milk carton.

Everyone will enjoy the entertainment and children will learn how important their role as “provider” is to the winter survival of wildlife.



Family Fun Around Your Neighborhood

Visit local historical sights.

Grandparents may remember how those places were in the “olden days” and would be happy to share their memories. Children will develop an appreciation of their community’s history.

Use your local library or bookmobile.

A weekly or monthly trip to the library will encourage children to read and everyone is sure to find something of interest. Your library and its services are free.

Discover some new and interesting sights right in your own neighborhood by taking a walk together.

Ask family members to take turns being the nature guide. Point out nests, identify trees, watch the wildlife. Walking is great for physical fitness, too.

If you have bicycles, you can go for family bike rides and see even more of your neighborhood.

Be sure all riders know and observe the rules of safe biking.

Attend a softball game or other sporting event in your nearby park.

You’ll enjoy the game, you’ll find many of your neighbors there for a chat, and your children will enjoy playing with their friends.



Invite friends to a potluck supper.

You needn’t provide anything except the space and your own dish to pass. It’s a great way to have an outstanding meal and enjoy good company — all at no extra charge.

Plan family fun in your own community and beyond.

Let school-age children be the guide to some of the places they’ve gone on field trips.

Many nearby attractions are free or inexpensive, especially if you take sandwiches (keep them cool) and plenty to drink for thirsty children.

Keep an eye on your local newspaper for free events in your area.

Many shopping centers provide free entertainment on a regular basis. Parades are fun, as are art fairs, county fairs, and so forth. Take folding chairs for elders or anyone not able to stand long. Go early.

When you do go out for the day, try to take enough food (properly cooled) or buy food in grocery stores.

These meals can be less than half as expensive as restaurant meals.

These are just a few suggestions to get you started thinking about free and low cost activities for your family. Youngsters will enjoy these activities as much or more than expensive attractions which are often over-crowded and tiring. Elders will enjoy being included occasionally in simple family fun more than they will enjoy being the object of a weekly “required” visit.

Activities shared with the whole family will be remembered with pleasure and may provide a helpful model for your family’s next generation. While you are saving money, you will be having fun and creating happy memories for your children.

Have a good month!

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