

A few suggestions for summer boredom busters

By VIRGINIA JUSTICE

Summer break is the time of the year when parents are most likely to hear those two short words that can reduce grown-ups to tears: "I'm bored!" So what's a parent to do? Keep the kids busy with a variety of activities.

While no one is guaranteed a boredom-free summer, here are a few ideas and that should help parents keep the whining to a minimum. Creating a "Boredom Busters" file or notebook will be worth the investment of time — build a weekly schedule, but keep it simple and flexible. Learning should be part of the mix, so start by browsing these websites.

Discovery Education (www.discoveryeducation.com). This awesome site provides teacher resources that parents can use (they have a parents resource page, too) with things like Puzzle Maker, which helps you create individualized word search and crossword puzzles. This site provides links to virtual field trips, browse-able by grade level and topic.

Scholastic (www.scholastic.com). This well-known publisher of children's literature products has built this site with resources for teachers and parents, and interactive online games for children. Scholastic divides reading and activities into age-appropriate levels.

Oregon Public Broadcasting (opb.pbslearningmedia.org). Oregon Public broadcasting provides resources for parents and teachers

to enrich learning. The site has links to interactive online learning games for children (pbskids.org). You'll even find some parenting tips at www.pbs.org/parents.

Offline, here are some other



ways to keep boredom at bay ...

Script and perform a play: Have children create their own play with costumes and have a performance after dinner for the family.

Plan and plant a vegetable garden: You can start your garden in the house before planting outside. Planting seeds in a clear plastic cup stuffed with wet paper towels is a great way for children to see how seeds become plants. Encourage children to try the food items they grow; this is a good way to get them to experiment with new foods. Have your kids work together to create a chart assigning watering, weeding and other gardening chores for everyone.

Scavenger hunt: Make a list of 10 or more easy-to-find items inside or outside your house. The winner gets a small reward. For older children who can spell,

scramble the letters on the list so they have to unscramble the words before they can search.

Edible finger painting: This is great for outdoor fun or an indoor area that is easily cleaned. Use

oversized T-shirts to protect clothing. Make white chocolate instant pudding according to package directions, divide the pudding into several bowls, then add different food coloring to each and mix well. Give each child a piece of freezer or parchment paper and add a teaspoon or more of

colored pudding to their paper. Children can paint with pudding and are free to lick their fingers. Be sure to take pictures of the final results — keeping this sugary artwork around is not recommended because it can attract bugs.

Build a blanket fort: Use blankets and sheets with furniture to create a fort for a picnic or reading. Don't forget: children must clean



Strategies

up their fort after playtime is over.

Paintball art: Partially fill small water balloons with poster paint using a funnel. Set pieces of paper on an easel; the distance to the easel can be adjusted according to the age of the child. Children should wear old clothes or cover up in case of paint splashes. Have kids throw different colored paintballs at their paper to create their own unique piece of art. Use clothespins or tacks to attach artwork to a line or fence to dry.

There are many other easy and inexpensive projects you can do to avoid boredom during the summer; most can be done with little planning. A quick search on Pinterest will result in scores of suggestions for children's activities. Let the Internet be your connection to the ideas and experiences of other parents who are happy to share.

Pendleton resident Virginia Justice has been a substitute teacher and a parks and rec volunteer. She and her husband have two college-aged daughters.

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