

## **Free!**

### **Things to do Outside:**

#### Explore

1. Visit a park – find one with swings, monkey bars and playground equipment to make it even more fun.
2. Find a Farmers Market – browse, explore, listen to live music, and try new foods with free samples.
3. Tour Local History – Find areas around you with historic buildings, plaques, and even old cemeteries to learn about local history.
4. Stargazing – check the calendar for meteor showers, or when Venus is close or any other cosmic event; then lay outside on a blanket and watch the show.
5. Beach Day – find a local beach (or lake) and explore the rocky crags, jetties, crab holes, sea life and shells. Remember the sandcastle building tools and plenty of sunscreen.

#### Exercise

1. Hike – look up hikes and mountains in your area on the .gov site or download the app Alltrails to find some great hikes off the beaten path.
2. Biking – try local roads, rails to trails or bike to a destination (my favorite is to bike for ice-cream).
3. Workout outside – take the jump rope, pogo stick, sidewalk chalk, and stretchy bands outside to create your own exercise course and routine with the kids.
4. Beach workout – walk or run on the sand, splash in the waves, find the most special shells or any other game. Try football or frisbee in the waves.
5. Frisbee – try your hand at the famous disc throw and go for consecutive catches or distance.
6. Splash and Swim – many towns have free splash pads or wading pools that you can go to for free. If this isn't near you, set up the hose and sprinkler and don your bathing suits for some fun cooling off.
7. Swimming - in the town pool, your pool, or the neighbors pool. Swimming is always a summer win.
8. Bowling – most states have a “kids bowl free” program. I know we did it and ours loved it! We still love to take the family bowling on summer vacation.

#### Gather

1. Fire Pit – You can build or buy one, then enjoy all year round. We love to toast marshmallows and invite over some friends too.
2. Town Festivals/Concerts – especially during summer, most towns have weekly music or festivals, and they are free! Bring a blanket, some snacks and mosquito repellent, then enjoy.
3. Outdoor Movie Night – Find the towns with free outdoor movie nights and enjoy a kid flick or old time classic under the stars.

4. Church – check your church or any church near you for their summer calendar of fun and free events. Most churches sponsor a Summer Bible Camp for a very low fee.
5. Sports – invite friends or neighbors and put together a soccer, flag football or basketball game.
6. BBQ Party – gather the neighbors, close the street, and have a street wide BBQ with games.
7. Friend Field Day – create your own backyard field day with jumping, running, racing, hopping, and rolling. The day is yours to make and create.
8. 4<sup>th</sup> Fireworks – attend a fireworks display. A pro tip – park further away, walk in and you won't get stuck for hours when it is all done, trying to get home.

### Fun

1. Kite flying – You can make your own or buy one, then find a big field near you and a nice windy day or a local beach and have a blast.
2. Picnic – pack snacks and sandwiches and eat it anywhere. Kids love a spontaneous trip, and this makes lunch special. We've even had wintertime outside picnics on top of a snowbank!
3. Camping – dig out that tent or borrow one, set it up in the backyard and explore nighttime right around you.
4. Day Trip – plan a day trip somewhere new. Pack some snacks, change of clothes and sweatshirts for when the day cools off. Expect lots of fun.
5. Photoshoot with the kids – dress up (or not) and just have fun with a spontaneous photoshoot. Some of our best memories are captured with the happy, silly and funny faces of these days.
6. Outdoor Movie Night – wait till dark, hang a sheet on the house and have a movie night. If you have a pool and it's been really warm, you can swim while watching the movie!
7. Attend a game – find a local school game and go to watch and cheer them on.
8. Bubbles – make or buy bubble solution and blow small and big bubbles. Take pics of the kids doing this. Priceless photos.
9. Orchard – go to your local orchard and pick fresh fruit. Blueberries, strawberries, peaches, pears, apples and then the fall fruits and veggies. Kids love this.

### **Things to do Inside:**

#### Explore

1. Library – let each child take out 5 books each week and keep them in one location of the house for easy returns each week. Read the stories during daily learning, bedtime, or naptime.
2. Museums – Many credit cards allow free museum days or as a local you can get in free once a month. Also, many museums have free passes at cooperating museums in other states.

3. Local college – many free events, shows, theater or planetariums at your local university or small college. Check it out!
4. Rainy Day Car Explore – pack the kids in the car and then just start off. They get to choose when to turn left and right. See where you end up and how to get back home again 😊

### Exercise

1. Dance Party – turn on some music and dance till you drop. You can let the kids choose the genre or you can pick music from any decade and dance it up. Points for the most active, most silly, the robot and any other category you come up with.
2. Indoor Play Place – IKEA, Jordans Furniture, Burger King, McDonalds all have indoor amazing play spaces – and they are free.
3. Ice Skating – nothing beats a hot day, like time on the ice! Put on skates, learn some new moves, and try it out.
4. Roller Skating – There are still some rinks around; find one and take some laps around the rink to some oldies or rock and roll.

### Gather

1. Conversation Starters – make your own cards with topics to start conversation (find ideas on the internet) and then take turns sharing.
2. Potluck Party – invite family or friends, bring all the kids, and make then try new foods. Try a theme night – Mexican, Italian, Seafood, Spanish, etc.
3. Movie Night – hang a sheet and project a movie onto the sheet for a really big screen experience at home. Or just watch it on the TV and chill in PJ's with fluffy pillows and blankets.
4. Time Capsule – gather the family and each put things in a sealed container, then bury it for a few years. Have a time marked on the calendar to dig it up and see what's inside.
5. Talent Show – Try this one with family or with friends, have a list of ideas then after some practice, put on the show. Don't forget the popcorn and photo paparazzi.

### Fun

1. Community Theater – many times these are free or nearly free, especially for children. Have fun and expose the kids to live theater.
2. Video chat – connect with far away friends or family and talk, share, and laugh together.
3. Spa Day – kids love bubble baths, lotions and playing with hair. Try out a kid centered spa day and end with silly or new hairdos.
4. Cuddle with animals – find a local shelter or humane society and spend some time cuddling with the dogs and cats. There are even places that let you foster puppies and kittens until they are adopted! This is a great way to try out pet parenting before you commit.
5. Band Jam – gather all the instruments in your house (kazoos count) and jam till you can't.

6. Cinderella to Princess – take your tween or teen girls to the mall and try on party dresses and take photos. Just for fun.
7. Sing – blast some music and sing together. Pick songs you know and some new ones. Print the words or show them on a screen. Use your phone to cast words to the TV for all to see.

### Learn

1. Learn something new together – do you have instruments at home? Try them out and play some tunes. Watch a video about drumming and try it out with your hands and feet.
2. Cooking Challenge – involve the kids in cooking a meal or baking a dessert/bread. Try something new or share a family favorite.
3. Artist in the House – get out the watercolors and create some new artwork. Or make some fingerpaint. Create something and post it on the wall.
4. Arts and Crafts – see what you have for craft supplies, then make a list and google “what can I make with \_\_\_\_\_” See what you can create.
5. Game Night – try some new learning games, number games and problem solving games. If kids have short attention spans, try several games for 15 minutes each and make the one who is ahead the winner.
6. Puzzle night – set up puzzles with various levels of difficulty on the table or floor. These can be set up for a few days (if there are no toddlers or puppies).
7. Build or Create – Many stores have free project events. Think of Lowes or Home Depot where the kids can build something; Barnes and Noble host book readings and snacks; Joann’s and Michaels have craft events. See what interests your kids and attend one.
8. Memory Book or Scrap Book – start this with the kids at the start of the summer and let them add the tickets, pins, drawings, instant pix from the summer fun.
9. Science – make a volcano, create a speaker, solve a household problem. Look up fun experiments or solutions to try then do them at home.

## **Seasonal Fun (when it’s not summer)**

### Fall

1. Flop in the leaves
2. Dress up
3. Pumpkin Carving
4. Thankful Pumpkin
5. Make Spiced Cider
6. Pinecone decorations
7. Trick or Treating (with a twist) – Go as a family to all of your neighbors to meet them and introduce your family or share a story.

### Winter

1. Snow – sledding, ice forts, castles, snowmen, and fun running paths. Possibilities are endless.
2. Paper Snowflakes –
3. Ice Fishing –
4. Winter Walks –
5. Snow Angels –
6. Winter Picnic –
7. Baking and Bread – make homemade muffins, cookies, cakes, and especially homemade bread.
8. Light Shows – Many parks decorate for Christmas. Plan an evening drive to enjoy the lights. Or just drive through well decorated neighborhoods and check out all the house décor.
9. Museums – many decorate with lights and have extra crafts at Christmas. See what is offered near you.

### Spring

1. Grow plants from Seeds – save your seeds and start your plants in a paper egg carton
2. Plant a Garden – After your seeds have grown and the ground is warm enough, plant your garden.
3. Visit farms or orchards with flowers or trees in bloom



MarlaDarius.org  
Summer Fun for Everyone