

By Melissa Taylor

# Survivor: Summer Edition

Save your sanity and have a fun summer with the kids. All it takes is a plan.

“No more classrooms, no more books, “chant your kids, my kids and kids across Colorado. It’s summer vacation. Do you know what you kids are doing?

This summer, I can answer yes. Last summer, not so much. See, I made the mistake of having no plans nor routine. Whoops. What I thought would be a nice “go with the flow” approach meant that my daughter forgot her math facts, I became a nag and “I’m bored” echoed throughout our house.

Not this year. This year, I’ve got a summer survival plan, one that won’t break the budget and one I’m sharing with you.

## Start with goals. Make a plan.

What are your goals? (Go ahead, write in the margins.) My goals might be similar to yours— keep my kids learning, active, enjoying friends and having fun. Boulder parent, Sherry Sommer, shares, “My goal for my kids is that they relax and also grow . . . intellectually, artistically, socially and spiritually.”

Now that you have your goals, use them to schedule the days, weeks and months of vacation.

## Daily Schedule

It’s important to get your routine started at the beginning of the summer. For my goals in





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learning, I like my neighbor, Amy Zirbel's approach. Her kids pick one workbook page of either math or reading comprehension and complete it first thing in the morning. Not only that, she adds in learning games throughout the day like math war, math bingo, license plate addition and restaurant bill addition.

After morning learning, my family plans to schedule the day's activities, which include a rest time. Sommer also likes rest time and says, "It may sound old fashioned and the kids complained often, but it turned out to be a sanity saver for me and they grew to look forward to it. Just about one hour when it's hot in the afternoon, non-electronic rest time."

**Weekly Schedule**

Now that I have a daily plan, I'm getting out the summer calendar to schedule each week. What will I schedule? Swimming lessons, camps, play dates and something entirely new – a collaborative home camp – easy on the budget, filled with learning and great for socializing.

**Home Camp Week**

My neighbor Amy is a great cook. And, another neighbor Gretchen, well, she's an amazing artist. Mindi's my crafty friend. I have lots of neighbors and friends with talents that I don't have. So this year, I'm going to collaborate with them to create an inexpensive home summer camp for all our kids, since we can't afford to send the kids to camp all summer. It will save us money and give our kids valuable social time. Each of my friends will host a half day or day of activities. We'll pick from the list of ideas below. Of course, we'll agree on supervision, behavior and emergency plans.

Most camps are broken up into predictable daily routines: morning activities, lunch, afternoon activities or free time, dinner and a campfire or evening game. Traditional camp categories are sports, arts and crafts, drama, swimming and campfire time. Here is a list for planning.

**Sports.** Try rock climbing, tennis, basketball, disc golf, bike races, water balloon games, hula hooping, kite flying, track meet, golf, an obstacle course or gymnastics.

**Swimming.** Plan a pool party with races, games and inflatables.

**Arts and Crafts.** Make your own camp t-shirts, painted pictures, bead necklaces, clay pots, key chains, sand castles, bird houses or dream catchers. Boulder mom, Leigh Steere, suggests reading the book *Roxaboxen* by Alice McLerran to inspire building a pretend city.

**Drama.** Create animals with face painting, hold a puppet show, write a skit which you perform, host a talent show or make a camp movie.



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**Cooking.** Make your own fruit sundae or granola, plan a meal including shopping and preparing, learn about the food groups, write a cookbook or try a new international food.

**Nature.** How about painted pots with flowers, lima bean shoots, windowsill herbs, cloud shape drawings, weather vanes, leaf collection books, animal tracks, bird watching, bug hunts, gardening, nature scavenger hunt, hike, map or compass reading?

**Community service.** Find a clean-up project, plant new flowers for the neighborhood, read to young children or older neighbors or help an elderly neighbor with weeding or raking.

**Camping Outside.** Pitch a tent in the backyard, sing campfire songs, make s'mores and tell ghost stories.

**Field Trips.** Visit the Littleton Historical Museum, the Denver Art Museum, the Museum of Nature and Science, the Denver Mint, the Molly Brown House, Buffalo Bill museum or Red Rocks.

### Family Olympics

If a week-long home camp doesn't fit for you, how about a one day Family Olympics? Denver parent, Stephanie Klein, organizes a Family Olympics each year to keep in touch with friends. In this Olympics, families compete against other families. She plans activities for all different age groups, events like relay races and egg tosses – things that you'd see in a school field day. The parents' events, well, they're more unique – like the dad hula hoop contest and the blindfolded "mom call". (The mom must find her own child who is calling out, "MOM" while blindfolded.) "All the families have family t-shirts and decorate a family flag. We do a presentation of flags with Olympic music," Klein says. She adds that everyone wins ribbons and trophies but only one family is the year's winner. The day ends in a pool party and dinner. "Our kids live for it!" Klein says.

"... no more teachers' dirty looks!" screech the kids arriving off the school bus ready for vacation. But, I'm not scared. I am ready. I've got it all planned out. And it's going to be a great summer vacation. What about you? ♦

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