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Making the Most of Your Summer Break



Homeschool Families
Share their Best
Ideas and Advice



Making the Most of Your Summer Break: Homeschool Families Share Their Best Ideas & Advice

edited by Jim Erskine

Published by
HomeschoolFreebieOfTheDay.com and HomeschoolRadioShows.com
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INTRODUCTION

In May 2009, we surveyed 250 homeschooling families and asked them five specific questions about how they handle their “Summer Break” from homeschooling and what advice they might have for other homeschool families who are thinking about their upcoming summer activities. In their answers, you'll find a wealth of tips, suggestions and ideas which should be very helpful to you in thinking through your own family's summer months. This report is a summary of the responses we received from this survey, edited only to cut back on repetitive answers.

Be aware that this is most definitely NOT a step-by-step “how to do your summer break” guide. Instead, consider this a compilation of thoughts from a bunch of friends who have “been there, done that” and who simply want to pass along their experiences and what worked (and did not work) for them. You may, in fact, find that one person's advice may directly contradict another's. That's where your own discernment and understanding of your own family comes into play. We encourage you to just take your time and read through these responses. There is some truly wonderful advice and guidance included in this report, but we leave it to you to sift through and glean what will work best for your own family. After all, you know them best. Enjoy – and have a wonderful summer!

Jim Erskine

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(For the record, my personal favorite tips are in Section Five.)

SECTION ONE

**How long do you usually take for your
“Summer Break” from homeschooling?**

No break at all: 16.1%
1 Week: 11.7%
2 - 4 weeks: 18.1%
1 month: 13.3%
*** 2 months: 26.2% ***
3 months: 12.9%
longer than 3 months: 1.6%

SECTION TWO

What is your FAVORITE thing about taking a "summer break" from homeschooling?

No pressure or stress to get something done! NO guilt for "unproductive" days

I get to reorganize my schoolroom.

We do a shortened school day when we are home. Yet are gone for a week as a family and the boys are gone for a week with our church youth camp and Boy Scout Camp. So I guess going to camp.

I can get caught up on housework and come back to teaching refreshed and excited.

These opportunities to travel around as a family are precious!

Chance for mom to recharge and plan for the next year.

We get to do some camps and some intensives (like music lessons daily instead of weekly).

Its a free for all period for all the family.

Enjoying hot weather, outdoors, beach, local swimming pool and relaxing listening to the sounds of nature.

It gives us time to focus on gardening, farm animals, and more 'carefree' time.

Summer is our chance to do new and different activities - focus more on educational games and field trips.

We get more into real life learning, i.e. vacations, leisurely reading, activity, time to explore, later night (stargazing), watching old movies.

Not having to plan each week's schedule!

We unschool, so we don't take a break per se, but I love that my kids can spend so much time outside in the summer, and we usually raise ladybugs or butterflies or something in the summer which is always fun.

Getting to do some of the projects or activities we just did not have time for recently. Also, my girls getting to decorate their new binders and getting to learn about new topics and projects that just did not fit into our schedule this past school year.

We go to VBS pretty much all summer long, at all the neighborhood churches.

Prep time for myself and down time for the kids to explore their interests. It also gives us freedom to go places and do things we could enjoy without having to ensure that homeschooling is done during the year. Time to have fun, unwind, and be with the smaller ones without worrying about their impact on our homeschooling morning. No complaints about having to work and yet a desire to return to work.

The kids and I can do those extra large projects/crafts that we can't really focus our attention on during the school year. We also get to read or listen to a bunch of books just for fun!

Time to stop and think. Time to "pack up" last year's paperwork and plan what to do with the "fresh slate".

My favorite thing about taking a "summer break" is going on day trips, going to library programs and reading, camping, hiking, crafting, life skills projects etc. We also enjoy doing 4H and the fair.

Although we don't take a break we do slow down the pace a bit.

**We get to do more of the outdoor stuff and make a lot more messes!
The kids have much more time to be kids.**

Going on road trips and visiting family that we do not get to see during homeschool time.

It is refreshing to both Mom and children. It allows us to do special activities (like VBS or camps) that either aren't offered other times of the year, or that we would not be able to fit in along with regular school work.

LOTS of read alouds when the really hot afternoons hit. Otherwise, we just like being outside in God's glorious creation not doing anything in particular.

Visiting family.

NO schedule of work, no logging papers. No deadlines looming large! Finally having time to ourselves to do something on our own!

I get time to recharge and the kids let me know what they liked and didn't like about the previous year. They also give input for next year's subjects.

We keep up with the basics, but summer means more fun "school." This summer we plan to visit a

water park and learn about flotation.

In our household, it seems like the culmination of the year's activities all happen from Feb through May ~ we're a musical family and all the recitals, competitions, and final performances seem to be nearly non-stop during those months. By the end of May everyone -- especially Mom and Dad -- is exhausted and looking forward to a break! So, we make plans to attend the state home educators convention in June and usually take the whole week off just before and just after. The convention is a "shot in the arm" for us as parents and the kids enjoy the change of pace as well. We then get inspired to continue on this path for which the Lord has given us His vision. :-)

Being more relaxed and not feeling like we have to get "it" all done by the end of the year.

More hands on science and history things by going camping and traveling

During the summer we do more science labs, field trips and outdoor things, get to spend more time family bonding and working on life skills

Where we live it's only 'summer weather' for a couple of months and then the rain and cold dreary weather starts, so we take full advantage of it.

Having time to read books that are not on our *lesson plan*! LOL We read so many books about the subjects we are *doing* that we really do not have time for other books...well, my son does not b/c he needs to get to bed...:o) but I stay up late, late to read extras!

It gives me time to catch up on records, research what I need to do for the next year. I get to get my life back!

We do a summer club of sorts. Last year, we used the Apologia Astronomy book and started an astronomy club for the summer. The families read a chapter a week and we got together at our house to do fun projects and experiments. We had an end of summer astronomy party where we decorated the meeting room in neon space things and black light. We did neon activities, had a neon and white cake, and built a rocket outside. It was a blast... literally! This year we're considering ideas... :-)

The ability to be able prayerfully PLAN...I love to plan.

We do not take summer breaks. But we are very laid back in the summer. We usually can't wait to start our "new" summer plans for our homeschool.

Sleeping later and drinking coffee in a rocker on the front porch while the kids play outside all day!

I can include summery type activities that are fun and not feel the stress of doing the mundane

We homeschool 3 days a week not 5.

Being able to just be a Mom for a change.

The best thing about summer break is learning outdoors, sitting on the deck reading with the children and doing crafts outdoors. Gardening is also great. We like watching our works turn into something

good for the kitchen, and then we explore how to cook what we produce.

I take the "time off" to prepare lesson plans and gather materials for the coming school year. That way, I am prepared to begin the new school year. I enjoy going through the kids' school books, and I REALLY like having everything ready to go when the new school year starts.

We actually continue "school" through the summer, but it's very relaxed and flexible. No real schedule or set table time. We live by the seasons here in Alaska. Taking school at a slower pace allows us plenty of time to take care of the garden, go fishing, put up food for the winter, and enjoy the special blessings from God during this very short season. I have time to reflect on what we did the previous homeschool year. The break refreshes us, helps us look forward to moving ahead during the upcoming year and helps me plan with a new perspective.

It's a time to watch my children and see how they have grown and matured in the last year. It also lets me step out of the full-time role of teacher and play just mom for a while. I also like the time between lessons to be able to think and dream about what the ideal school year will look like come this fall.

We don't really take a break, but we "lessen" our schooling :-). We sleep a little bit later in the day and incorporate more life experiences - for example; gardening, home repair, home economics (canning, freezing etc), swim lessons, church outreach, etc.

No planning, no groaning kids

I love to not have to think about what we are going to do today for school. but the truth is - a homeschooling mom never stops thinking about what we are going to do today.

Well, although we might take a break from any "bookwork" for a bit, all of life is learning - that's why we homeschool. So, we will try & see lil bits of our province or area which we haven't before - mainly because some activities only take place in the summer. A day trip here, a day trip there - hiking in the mountains, wandering through a small town's museum or taking part in a nearby town's "country fair." (so cool for my city kids) oh - one fav thing? ... the fact there are just too many to count :)

We don't take breaks because our homeschooling is not based on a scheduled time of day, week, or year. We consider most things we do as a chance to learn something, so it goes on continuously. We find our most of our teaching/learning experiences to be practical and fun as well as educational. We usually get to travel someplace that has some sort of live experience of something we have learned about or will be learning about soon.

It's not that we deliberately take summer break...we're farmers and VERY busy from mid-May to the end of September. No time for "formal" home school...but lots of learning opportunities!

Worms, garden experimentation, bubbles

We take varying degrees of a break in the summer. Once we took a full break with no schooling. But usually we keep going with at least math, and sometimes most of the other subjects as well. When we do take a break, I absolutely LOVE the absence of a schedule and NEEDING to get up and get started in the mornings. I also love the feeling of the brand new school year as we approach September, starting fresh and new and being excited to get back into the school groove.

We do a 'lighter' version of school during the summer- more fun, more hands-on, more child-directed

SECTION THREE

What is your LEAST FAVORITE thing about taking a "summer break" from homeschooling?

The longer the break, the harder it is to get back into a routine.

The potential need to re-teach something. A lot of the 'academic' stuff (mainly math) tends to get lost when it's not being reinforced. Remembering my own childhood, I hated that have to remember what I "forgot" over the summer.

Chaos can occur without our schedule in place. There can be too much "free time" with bored children.

The opportunities are wide open and with so many things to choose from, it can be difficult deciding what to do!

It's so hard to get back into the school routine and adjust it to any needed changes when the break is over. We maintain regular bedtimes and wakeup times but the school lessons need to be eased into.

The kids tend to need more direction on what to do and I run out of ideas that will occupy them and allow me to focus on other projects.

My least favorite thing about taking a "summer break" is feeling like we haven't been as productive with our free time as we should have been and that we really didn't do a lot of anything. It's also hard starting back up with school and getting everyone motivated and back into the routine.

We must find our brains again to get back at it!

Our least favorite thing is loss of structure and momentum because we HS all year round. That is why we take short breaks throughout the year, not just during the summer.

We do a modified year round schedule; after the June convention break (a couple of weeks) we

concentrate on one or two academic subjects and use the rest of the time for pursuing life skills training (summer jobs, etc.). If anything interferes with the schedule, because it is summer everyone (me included) tends to think, "Oh well, it's just summer, it won't hurt; we can get back on track tomorrow (or next week)." Then if we aren't careful, we get out of the "habit" and before you know it, summer is over and we've lost our momentum (always feel like we're behind when that happens). That's why we went to a year round schedule, in order to instill the discipline ~ what other type of work in the real world gives anyone 3 months off at a stretch? ;-)

Nagging my oldest (14) to do her daily math review to keep her skills fresh.

Not having as much of a schedule seems like we drift a bit.

Alot of "flitting" from one activity, and mess, to another. Even though they don't want "school" they seem to get bored without it. When the boredom bickering starts...that's when I know it's time for school to start.

Knowing that we could be learning more *academics*. We realize that there is time for that and a break is welcome, however!

I don't like getting back into the school groove in the fall. I am actually planning to hang on to some of our daily school routine through the summer to make the transition easier this year.

We continue doing "light" schooling. We try to play a lot of games to keep up their skills. We still do a lot of nature study and hikes.

I miss the routine because I don't seem to get as much accomplished as when we are doing school. I also don't like how much free and unproductive time my children have.

We don't take more than a week at a time because it takes so long for my DD to get caught up again, especially in math. We took the entire summer off the first year, and spent almost two months in the fall getting her back to point where we left off in May.

We all feel a little bit disorganized and sometimes aren't quite sure what to do with ourselves when we take extended time off. We all like to stay on a routine and feel like we have some idea of what we will be doing each day.

I have a tough time forming new, good habits. I love the relaxed pace so much during the summer that it's a bit tough for me to "get down to business" in the fall. Getting more organized with school signals the end of our beautiful long summer days, and signals the beginning of the long Alaskan winters. Winters are beautiful here, and they bring their own special excitement for our family, but the summers are too short.

It tends to fill up too quickly with work, extra activities, and travel. (It's all good stuff but tends to leave me feeling like I really haven't gotten much of a break sometimes.)

Sunburns

The kids do not do as well with a break from schooling. They do not behave as well with huge amounts of open hours before them. So, even though I love the absence of scheduled time for myself, it just ends up backfiring in dealing with the stress of children lacking discipline. I also get tired of the lack of discipline for myself at the end of a month or two.

Days that are "boring". Sometimes my child verbalizes this word a little too often.

Having kids with special needs means that they can't take a break from learning for very long without regressing and losing information.

SECTION FOUR

What are your own family's favorite learning activities during the summer months?

We do a few problems in the areas they struggle in each morning immediately after breakfast.

We go to different camp grounds in the state and sometimes out of state. We study the different types of soils, plants and animal life. We also look at the different cultural history of the area we are in. Say we were to camp in Kern County, CA, we would see what type of indian lived in the area, what they grew/hunted. How they may of preserved their foods? What was the impact of the missionaries on the indians? Where was the best place to live? The list just goes on from there. History, sciences, vocabulary words etc. all in a camping trip.

Field trips to lakes, ponds, and streams to study nature. Field trips to museums and zoos because the bus loads of "school" children aren't usually there.

Going on field trips, visiting museums, doing projects on the computer (such as making web pages), reading books, swimming for exercise, camping and hiking in the high country to learn about nature.

This year we will go on vacation early (3 weeks ending July 4) since it is cheaper to go when public schools are still in session (we are in NJ). Then home with a week of science camp, a week of nature camp at the local Watershed and then two weeks of daily lessons. August will be reserved for field trips that we didn't complete during the year (trip to Valley Forge, PA; trip to Williamsburg, VA and Boston, MA) and then other days closer to home (zoo, museums, outings with homeschool friends and family). I guess enrichment would be our watchword for the summer. Also, LOTS of reading and math games - the fun stuff not the required or drills!

Geography - local and near landscape appreciation. Visits - looking in on other peoples activities and jobs. Nature - everything to do with plants, animals; how they relate in the environment.

Reading summer/adventure novels, nature watching, walking and camping/activities.

Preparing animals for fair (bathing, practice showing, etc), fruit picking (learn plant sciences, food preservation), camping (tree id, life sustenance w/o modern conveniences - campfire + cooking)

Day trips to historical sites, reading, listening to stories on tape when travelling.

Gardening, going to the zoo, nature walks, raising butterflies or ladybugs or tadpoles, right now we're watching baby birds grow in the nest on our porch.

Looking up every bird, plant and animal we see.

Going for walks/hikes, Vacation Bible School, bike riding, drawing with chalk on the sidewalk!

Work on constructive hobbies like Lego, Woodworking. Go for vacation to other places. Join some classes like art, painting.

We take different outdoor field trips (zoo, fishing trips, nature hikes) and museum visits. We also keep a garden and can the produce that comes from it. The kids also participate in the summer reading club at the library.

Games, building things with scraps of wood, painting, this year planting our garden is going to be a big job for everyone.

Going to the Cincinnati Zoo, either to take classes or just wander on our own. We've done this many years in a row and several of the zoo teachers know us well. They are willing to share tidbits about the zoo and its animals that the general public does not know. We also take a canoeing trip with the local homeschool group at a nearby Morgan Canoe Livery. We are also blessed to have Caesar Creek State Park, Ohio, near us. We take a picnic lunch and go walk the trails or fossil hunting. The spillway for the dam is one of the best spots in the world for Ordovician fossils. You check in at the US Army Corps of Engineers Visitor Center and ask permission to go fossil hunting. They have a museum about the dam and the fossils, as well as southern Ohio fauna. They have a few simple rules about the fossils you can take home: no bigger than the size of your palm; no using tools (or rocks) to dig fossils out; and no climbing in the talus at the cliffs edges. If you climb you are taking your life in your hands. We have been there when several large pieces of rock weighing several hundred pounds has fallen.

This year I have asked the kids to focus on something they want to learn, Spanish for both, computer programming for my son, and wars for my granddaughter.

*VBS *day camps (we've done a theater camp and a nature camp) *library reading programs *family film fest *concerts, plays (as both spectators and participants) *art shows and museums *county/state fairs *a small co-op (5 families) that worked through parts of a simple science curriculum *nature hike/ picnic *children's museums *swimming lessons *A unit study that is completely different than what we do the rest of the year *a vacation that includes journaling, picture taking, scrapbooking, family games/activities, and exploring local places of interest *gardening *water experiments and activities

We do lessons during the summer, but on a modified and reduced basis - usually math, reading, and writing as well as some other special studies. We take off on beautiful days and work on less-than-lovely days, since our Michigan climate isn't always summery even in the summer. This allows us the freedom to take off on other days throughout the year, when the weather is unseasonably nice, when

there is an opportunity we'd like to take an advantage of, or just when I need a mental health day.

Nature Journaling. We take really GOOD quality colored pencils and/or water color pencils and draw our favorite aspects of nature. I have a book with the latin names of plant life we label our drawings with. We look up in our field guides any other information. They learn art, nature and so many other things. Very relaxed...very wonderful.

Field trips, field trips, and MORE field trips! We use the time to have fun outside more. My boys also participate in swimming lessons and other similar activities including VBS. I also like to take time to sneak in learning with some fun lapbooks about activities they like to do (baseball, etc.) and do lots of reading. We are still learning even on our break but I try it's more relaxed than our regular school year. Everyday, there is science and life lessons to be learned.

Hands on activities. We do so much "book" work during the normal year, we really look forward to being "off" schedule to tackle handiwork projects.

Marking off a square foot of ground and finding out what all we can find in our square foot. God lets us find marvelous little/minute things that we probably would never observe if we hadn't marked off and studied our small little space.

We enjoy home improvement projects, such as roofing or painting. Not just the project, but all the planning that is involved with measuring, pricing, time it will take, etc. Wonderful learning for future home owners, both for young men and young women.

Bug collecting - we've spent time collecting and studying various insects. We currently have a small collection of caterpillars my youngest found, kept, and has fed enough that they've been moved into the butterfly house. No need to send in the order form on this one! :)

General everyday learning, like "unschooling" Baking, doubling recipes (I mean math) grocery shopping, (checking prices comparing etc, math again) Writing letter to penpals (I mean handwriting)

1. Reading books! There's more time since we don't have deadlines of papers/projects/competitions and the performances (musical and drama) that we do during the regular academic year. 2. Field trips ~ again, more time. This summer we're going to visit family in FL so we hope to visit NASA at Cape Canaveral (we've been told it's not to be missed)! 3. Life skills~ e.g. summer jobs. Teaches the kids responsibility; as ours get to be teens, they have to earn their 1st yr auto ins. premium and the cost of their driver's ed course before they are allowed to apply for their learner's permit. Driving a car is a privilege and a responsibility ~ ours don't get the privilege until they are willing to take on the extra responsibility it entails. [It's worked out great with the first 4 of our kids ~ we see no reason to make a change with the last 2 of them. ;-)] The younger ones also work on life skills ~ non-paying jobs or chores around the house they haven't yet learned. There's more time to concentrate on that kind of training during the summer when we're not doing as much academics. 4. Outdoor activities ~ yard/garden work (teaches specific skills, as well as being healthy exercise); and we happen to have an above ground pool (gift from generous grandparents 20 years ago) which we taught all the kids how to maintain as they got old enough ~ we love having that for the exercise, gets us out in the sunshine for our Vitamin D :,) and it's great for hospitality ~ we can have friends over and not worry about the lack of modesty our kids would be exposed to at the local neighborhood or Y pool ~ a big deal especially with teen boys.

We learn whatever comes into our path, nothing specific most times. When they were younger (my youngest are now 12), I used to have a goal of learning to ride a bike, swimming, etc. but now we do things like learn to use a chain saw, develop a yard business, etc.

We, my hubby and I, pick one unit for the summer. Of the past 3 years, we have done zoology and visited lots of zoos, ocean animals and we went to the shore. This year is dinosaurs and we'll go to museums.

The kids each pick something to study and we read books from the library about their choice of topic.

Because it is so hot where we live we enjoy renting/watching biographies, stories of inventions, History channel, Discovery channel etc. and discussing/comparing such topics. If there was an invention we may choose to try and 'create' it...we will usually look up (on the internet) photos and more info on what we watched and print things to put in a folder for later.

Summer is a great time to visit museums. Try to copy what you remember on paper or by building a replica of something that excited you!

Never forget your camera! Taking a camera on your drive really helps you notice things you would otherwise miss. Having a notebook and jotting down when the photo was taken (time of day, day etc.) and where. (IF we know exactly where we are!!LOL)

Reading! We always take extra time at night before bed for reading! We stay up at least an hour or so later during summer months to do this.

Summer break for us includes continuing math lessons. We do math 6 days a week, year-round -- yes, that is legal LOL! The only math break is when the kids go to camps. Every child goes to at least one week of camp -- depending on what's available and affordable (most are day camps) -- scout camp, theater, art, rock-climbing, etc. camps. We also travel to visit family around the country and try lots of activities in different places -- tours of pickle and candy factories, kayaking, hiking, renaissance faires, learning to sail at a relative's lake cottage, touring historical peoples' homes, visiting cathedrals and Amish farms, museums, zoos, a bison ranch, a breeder of the Budweiser horses, an exotic animal rescue shelter, the Grand Coulee Dam, historical sites of all varieties, a bluegrass festival, quirky places like a man who welds large sculptures of animals from old farm equipment pieces and the world's largest ball of paint (Guinness verified!), whatever unique things are available wherever we are visiting.

Swimming is a family favorite. We love to camp, fish and explore nature. I have avid bug catchers in my family. It is also a good time to catch up on the things we don't have time to do during the school year like painting, re-modeling, gardening. Lastly we love to do arts and crafts all year long. crafts, outdoor investigations, visiting local sites

We like to study trees and flowers and birds in a less structured way. Going to the lake and state parks is a good way to do this.

I tend to read more bedtime stories to the kids because I don't feel as pressured to get them in bed so that we can have an early start. They don't have to get going quite as fast in the morning.

We love to go to historical parks, reenactments at these parks, lay around watching the clouds and the stars. Search for bugs in the yard, identifying herbs/ wild plants in the neighborhood. In the summer my children really do not realize we are still homeschooling, except for a little math, they LOVE that we

usually spend more time together. There is also more time for questions and discussions!

We usually hit the beach once a summer and the mountains for a couple of months. We spend hours outside each day. This summer, we are using Anna Comstock's Handbook of Nature Study as our guide, with the help of a blogger who has been using it for quite some time

<http://handbookofnaturestudy.blogspot.com/2009/05/outdoor-hour-challenge-birds-crow-red.html>

In our travels to and from our destinations, we always try to take the time to stop at museums, forts, zoos, etc. along the way. We try to hit local historical sites or exhibitions we've missed. Also, we host a three day summer camp for all the cousins in the family. Each year we have a theme and play games and do experiments. The kids produce their own play and present it on the last day. This year the theme is Engineering. We'll build all sorts of structures out of paper, food, recyclables, branches and twigs, etc.

We mainly focus on science outdoors. Trees, leaves, bugs, plants, butterflies, birds, moths. We try to figure out what species they all are. Sometimes we'll make a display board.

We try to keep up our reading skills by having the kids read out loud to Mom and Dad over the summer. The kids enjoy reading to us for a change, and we enjoy it too. We go to the library a lot too.

The older kids enjoy having "multiplication facts" contests to see who can give the correct answer the fastest as Mom calls out each problem. Also, we spend extra time going on educational field trips like museums (especially hands-on science museums), zoos, aquariums, etc.

Our children help in our large garden filled with vegetables, herbs and flowers. They learn about the plants, how they grow, how they reproduce, and about the bugs. I use many garden and wild plants for salves, tinctures and in homemade soaps. My children love helping me with those activities, and know exactly what to pick. They even know what can be done with each plant. We eat and put up many wild plants, and my children have learned all about the edible ones. When they're playing during the summer, they love to carry around pails to collect delicious wild edibles for supper.

Many birds nest in our yard and near our home, and we have swallow houses and bat houses. Our children love watching the birds build their nests and observing them interact with each other. They get to see the mama birds with their new babies. My children are young, but with all the natural science around us, they've learned to identify all of the birds that frequent our area by their appearance, and most by their sound.

The children love going fishing. Good biology lessons on fishing trips!

During the summer, it's daylight all the time here in Alaska... and then during the winter, we have only a few hours of daylight. There's such a contrast in the seasons here that it heightens interest in astronomy, and they are naturally encouraged to ask many questions. Although science is our

favorite summer subject, we find lots of natural math while we're outside. They help us figure things out for the garden: length of the rows, width of the beds, how many of each plant, how far apart, etc.

One of my sons recently found two sticks that he thought were perfect for measuring. When I checked them, one was almost exactly a foot long, and the other was almost a yard. He's only 4, but since sticks have always been his favorite toy, he now measures everything with his new measuring sticks.

We read math readers and play math games all year. My children enjoy them so much that we continue, even during the summer.

Most of our summer is spent serving at church camps. My kids learn to teach, care for younger children, share their faith through a variety of media and leadership skills. They learn perseverance as they deal with difficult children while out in 90-100 degree temperatures. In addition, our children attend New Life Bible Camp in PA where they are challenged to grow in faith through bible study and physical activities that are used to point them to a life dedicated to living for and serving Christ. When we travel to relatives' homes, we usually look for at least one museum or activity that has some history behind it, even though Grandma says her house is for fun, not education! Bah!

We usually take July, Aug and Sept off so we can get in our family vacation AFTER all the public's go back to school. We explore all over our state in mini trips and 1 long 10 day trip across the state. That trip will be our first writing/geog/science activity once homeschool starts again

We love going to small town museums, participating in old fashioned country fairs where they even have contests like copywork & learning how to make butter! We check out all the handmade items, photographs & take part in old-fashioned games. On other days, we read interpretive signs on the hikes we take which explain aspects of the surrounding geology/geography. Sometimes we stop to read similar signs on the roadways; it's surprising & fun to learn bits of history this way. Lying in the sun watching the shapes the clouds make & thinking of stories to go with them while they change their shapes. Wandering through various mountain paths, watching what shapes the trees are & why they formed that way; finding stripes of coal through sandstone shapes - summer is hands on, feet on & lots of fun. Last summer, the kids bounced on the trampoline with the sprinkler under it & the rain coming down on them - not sure what they learned but they truly had a lot of fun when it rained. We live near a man-made lake & the kids have caught (& released) tadpoles, learned to paddle a canoe quietly & swiftly to the middle of this lake & then stop to watch how the mother duck guides her babes around or watch to see the fish jump. It's not totally perfect as the lake is surrounded by humongous homes but there are areas we can stop so they're less noticeable.

Summer is a great time to do all those fun things that got pushed to the side in order to finish on time.

Child led activities are always great. This also time to bust out with the Random subject jar. (a family favorite that several of our homeschooling friends have adapted into their homeschools too).

Gardening gives the opportunity to see plants grow, change and produce - flowers, fruits/vegetables; trips to U-pick farms gives us the opportunity to see a much larger operation and appreciate the benefits of teamwork - when we all pitch in, we can pick much more in a short time than when some are playing and not picking!

Cycling for the physical activity. The children often ride their bikes during the day, but we also do family rides that are longer and on busier streets so they have an opportunity to learn rules of the road

and we will talk about the areas in which we are riding.

In our state you have to do a pretty detailed study of the state and its history, prior to finishing the eighth grade level. Throughout the summer we take day trips or short over-nighters to various sights through out our state...In the planning I include a learning aspect from our state curriculum study. We use these trips to give our family mini-vacations, while at the same time, going over any learning opportunities to meet our curriculum...it turns out to be a win-win situation for us...learning while vacationing.

There was a summer reading program in our neighborhood for a few years. Nothing special, just a handful of kids with a few adult volunteers who provided breakfast, reading material and crafts. Well, even though it hasn't been happening for the past couple of years, my kids still ask me about it and beg me to take them.

Kits, kits, kits - the kids get science, history, craft kits for holidays and we never seem to have enough time to get to them. So, in the summer, it's a great time to keep them learning while still having fun and creating. I think it reinforces the value of learning something new every day; while also teaching them that learning is fun.

Our older children participate in community theater. Lot's of learning skills there.

Since we live in Colorado, we map out hikes we want to go on. First thing in the morning, the kids read before getting breakfast. The libraries have reading programs that we sign up for. The kids will pick one thing they want to accomplish. For instance one child decided he would learn to ride a unicycle! And he did it. This is the time to take advantage of the weather and do educational activities around that. Summer offers unique opportunities to do things outdoors and not just workbook stuff. Beach, musweums (especially Aviation Museum), state park. We aim for free activites.

Gardening is new favorite summer activity. So many learning opportunities naturally present themselves. Everything from science, to God's care to math (think multiplying with green peas). Hikes seem to prevail in the warmer months. That type of hands-on science is wonderful and makes many lasting memories. We also love reading our usual good books while lounging on the couch under the living room fan. Oh yes, and we can't forget our summer concerts in the park. Our community has free concerts in the local parks every Friday night. Live music and free samples from local business in the cooling evening weather make a great end to a busy school week while getting in some more schooling (music, arts, social studies!)

One of our regular holiday activities is to spring clean each child's room. This includes rearranging it.

We spend quite a bit of time in the garden and encourage our children to have their own garden plots.

We learn new crafts, an excellent time for woodworking with dad or learning a craft from someone else in the church/ community.

We catch up with friends and with the cousins. Our activities with the cousins include fishing, a hike, a variety of "competitions" eg best cake, yummiest pie etc, hut making and an after dark treasure hunt.

The holidays are an excellent time for work experience. Things we have done are photography, baking, planning a trip, raising money by developing a small business and selling something you have made. One holiday the girls made a movie. Sometimes they have joined up with friends and put on a concert.

Wet days are a good opportunity to pull out games.

When the children are younger it's fun to go on a pretend vacation to an interesting country. Find out all about it. Eat the cuisine, dress in costume, fill in a "travel log", pretend passports etc. We also have quiz nights- general knowledge. Putting together a family recipe book. or planning recipes for the next term.

We like to listen to audio books and watch great videos/ films together- this is difficult to find! Always high on the list is reading, lots of it.

Our favorite learning is starting an elective class early before the actual school year starts. This summer we are starting Latin and continuing for the rest of the school year. Mainly have fun open books and find fun learning the kids can relate to. My sons love science so we are doing labs for the summer local fairs, farmer's markets, various educational activities provided in the community.

Read books under the shade of a tree. Have picnics. Invite other family to go disk golf or fly a kite (even better if you can make your own).

Reading competitions; whether through the public library or our own family challenge. We switch back and forth each summer.

Taking a topic that is chosen completely based upon the interest of the child, and creating a lapbook.

SECTION FIVE

What tips or advice would you give to new homeschooling families who are going into their first "summer break"?

Don't take the entire summer off of everything. It can be a great time to try something new on a limited basis to see if it will fit with your family.

Don't force it. Make it fun. Enjoy each and every new discovery.

Cut the regular day in half, or at least do a little reading, writing and math, when ever dad is working, young siblings are napping or so you do not have to re teach months of work in the fall.

Don't do it! :)

Plan for the next school year early, order curriculums early - worst thing is to start the year without materials.

Plan for a 32 week year instead of 38, in case an emergency comes up, you won't feel like you're behind.

Start slow. If you're kids are used to a long summer break, break long enough for them to get "bored" and then start up again. When it is time for the "new school year" have a "back to school" party to switch gears.

Relax, have fun, don't try to do too much, just enjoy your family time together.

Drill math facts over summer and make reading books a priority!!

Find creative ways to integrate learning. It pays to 'keep at it' (albeit informally), so that very little - if anything - fall through the cracks.

Get ready for next "school year" before August. Formal lessons will sneak up on you sooner than you think!!

Have a 'graduation' ceremony with certificates of completion and a party! :) You did it! Note everyone's comments on their past year went -- highs & lows. Take individual photos & a group shot. make a plan that fits your family - don't just do what the public schools do

Have learning as a lifestyle, and there's no need for a summer break. There are learning opportunities all around.

This is a good time to do all the projects or activities that you never seem to have time for during the normal school schedule. Projects we work on are learning new chores, art and craft projects, history or science projects that review what we studied this year or were of interest, but did not fit with what we studying. Also great time to catch up on writing friends and family that do not live close by.

Relax, everything can count as homeschooling, so long as you are actually talking with your children.

Keep the kids aware that learning is in every day things. Not just notebooks and worksheets.

If your children have been struggling in a subject require something each day. One line of cursive, one page of math, three pages of a chapter book (or a chapter), until it has compiled into an hour of work. When work is done they are free to play.

Do lots of museums, be outside as a family, do lots of cooking and science, rent movies that matched your studies, and get together with friends as much as possible.

A good time to find what interests your child and pursue them together. Also the perfect time to seek the Lord together and find creative ways of using their talents to be fruitful.

Have a plan on when you will 'start back' and have a clear idea of what you will do. I try to plan at the beginning of our break so that I can really relax, otherwise it is spinning in my head during our holiday.

Realize that it might take 2 weeks to get back into routine after the break. Plan for that! I find little incentives for those first 2 weeks help - a small treat for a good attitude.

Don't let the kids know that they are learning during the "fun activities". Enjoy the free time together and just have fun. You know that they are learning. ;)

Don't stop the math; keep working on it at least twice a week. Don't stop at all if you can "get away with it", instead plan 2 week breaks through out the year....truly plan them and do something completely different.....travel, home repair, campout in the backyard, etc.

Have everyone keep reading! Most libraries have a summer reading program to encourage this so make use of it. Take the opportunity to make trips that you don't feel you have the time for during the school year. This can even be the local trips around town to see how businesses work.

Don't necessarily try to work ahead, try not to play catch up- just put the books away and take a break, however just keep reading snuggle time.

Make a summer scrapbook of all the fun you have. Buy each of the kids a cheap scrapbook and disposable camera. Special summer themed stickers can also be fun. You can go through magazines and cut out picture to add to the scrapbook. I would plan an activity for the week such as going to the pond and feeding the ducks, and then an arts and crafts project related to our activity for the next day such as coloring a picture of a duck or using construction paper to cut out the shape of a duck. I would check out some books from the library to read about ducks fiction and non-fiction maybe even a movie. We would spend a day putting everything into our scrapbook for the week and writing our journal entry. As you go about your summer take picture of your activities and collect souvenirs of places you visit or things you do. For instance if you plant a garden take pictures of the project and then dry leaves or flowers to add to the scrapbook. If you go to the beach you can put a shell or a small baggie of sand to add to your book. If you go to the movies save your ticket stub. Make your scrapbook a two page spread style by adding pictures, crafts and souvenirs to the first page and on the second have the child journal about what they did. Do arts and crafts projects small enough to fit into the scrapbook. Get some drawing books from the library about birds and practice drawing and add the small drawings to the scrapbook on the day you went birding in the woods. Color a picture of a duck and add it to the page of the day you went to the pond to feed the ducks. This project is good for 1.) The experience of the activity (day trip- birding, feeding the ducks) 2.) Arts and crafts projects that can be added to the scrapbook (color, draw, painting) 3.) photography 4.)scrapbooking 5.) journaling

Try not to take a full break. Even if you don't "officially" school during the summer, make sure that they do something that is educational most days. You can do math in the pool with measuring cups and the water (or at the beach with the sand). Educational experiences don't have to be boring or in a classroom or at the dining room table. Be creative and have fun.

Do the fun learning activities that you did not have time to do during the year. Don't tell the kids they are learning.

Take a break part of the time, but plan to have 2 days a week where you continue having some school for a couple of hours. You can be nontraditional -- games, more science experiments, scrapbooking a trip -- but definitely don't let math, all copywork, phonics, and reading aloud go away for the whole summer.

Don't let your brain completely check out of schooling. It is too hard to get going at the end of the break. Keep learning but just don't let the kids know they are schooling by the things they are learning (maybe things that you all don't typically do during the course of the school year).

Don't be tempted to be a teacher (not ever, but especially in the summer). Just relax and watch what your kids naturally gravitate to so you can know better what to invest in for them when fall rolls around and all those magical homeschool catalogs come in the mail.

Read, read, read!!!

Shorter breaks (1-2 weeks at a time) throughout the year seem to work best for us in subjects like math, so that no one gets rusty. We usually do one break early in summer, and one break at the end. However, as relaxed-schoolers, we don't really ever stop "doing school". All through the year we do read-alouds and individual reading, various writing activities, and learning about other subjects through both our reading and the various activities we participate in. For us, summer is just a change of pace instead of a break from learning.

Focus on spending time ENJOYING your children and PLAYING WITH them. STOP making every moment teachable and hold dear the moment! Play catch and frisbee, ride bikes; love them with your time and energy.

Let the kids find things to do. They will definitely do so. Don't try to over schedule their time. They need to have the freedom to learn to entertain themselves and learn from their own adventures. Have lots of fun.

Try not to conform it to the public schools' break period, make one that works for your family. 'Summer breaks' do not have to be strictly during Summer, you know.

Be confident enough to choose what works well for your family - whether that means taking a break because mom needs it even if other families school year round, or if it means working through the summer even if your children aren't thrilled to do that. You can choose what will be the most beneficial to your family.

Don't be afraid to take a break! So many people think they can use the summer to "catch up" with the public school kids...if they only knew, that most public schools don't finish their curriculum and the public school kids are behind the homeschooling kids. So, don't worry - you are where you are suppose to be - put your worries and cares into our Heavenly Father's hands and let Him fill you with His peace.

Look at it as a more relaxed version of what you do during the rest of the year. Kids never stop learning. They learn to entertain themselves, self-control, creative arts, athletics and a myriad of other subjects even though the books are closed. Take advantage of this glorious time to enjoy them and model Jesus for them.

I think the most important thing is to do something, anything, to keep going. At least have them read something everyday, or read to them everyday.

Take the time to read up on different curriculum, how-to books, and gather the materials you need. It is helpful to organize your school before it starts....that way you don't feel so scattered.

I find I still have to have some type of loose schedule to help give us direction.

Relax and build family relationships and lasting memories. Keep a routine even if it is not "school".

Home education is not "school" so keep learning, observing and enjoying God's creation every day even during "summer break" (just don't make a big deal of it)!

Enjoy the outdoors as much as possible.

Find some fun things that your children like to do that you typically say "we don't have time for" and do them. Play games. Go on trips. Learn a new skill. Have fun & unwind.

Don't take too much time off. Do tiny bits each day so the kids don't lose knowledge or their "school spirit".

Don't burn yourself or your family out by doing "too much". We plan on having school off and on throughout the summer months. We'll be taking breaks here and there, but we'll always have daily reading time & quiet time.

Be specific about expectations at the beginning so the kids know how long the break is and when school starts again this way there are no shocks or surprises when school comes around again. Most things can be a learning experience. They don't always have to know they are learning. Have fun with it.

Don't feel guilty about relaxing. And don't forget to take time to sketch out a rough plan of what you want to accomplish next school year.

Take time to enjoy just being "the mom"... and let the kids take the lead with their discoveries and interests. take time to refuel yourself so that you will be a better mom, and teacher, in the fall.

Snap photos , keep pamphlets, ticket stubs, postcards ,programs, etc of all you do and see. You'll be amazed at how much you have done and have a record of it.

Don't force learning, but don't waste this time either. Learning can happen anytime, anywhere. Let life teach all of you. Learn together and have fun.

Stop thinking like public schools. School through the summer, with breaks, so that you can school through the winter with more breaks.

Depends on your situation of course, but I wish I'd had someone help me formulate and write out a/my Biblical Philosophy of Education before I started on our home education journey ~ it would have made things easier in terms of finding the Lord's will when it came to our journey. We did a LOT of trial and error and while the Lord redeems everything in our lives, having done things the hard way, I gladly tell folks now that if we'd asked the Lord to show us His philosophy of education to begin with, we'd have done some things quite differently. :) Character training ~ which is always on-going of course, but in

summer when there is less focus on academics, it's a good time to make sure that our character qualities ~ ours and our children's ~ are being trained to God's standards. By the time September comes around good character habits have had a chance to become ingrained. :)

Realize that formal learning is only one aspect of education. Experience, travel, working jobs--there are many ways to develop necessary skills for life.

Don't take a "break". Make the most of your time "off"!

Still keep a schedule, but change it up a bit. Keep learning, but take it outside and do lots of field trips and follow your child's lead on what interests them and find a way to bring it back to life at home... if you're at the zoo, find out what animals they like and then learn about those animals... where they're from... what they eat, etc.

Take time to let your kids relax and feel that they are "off" for a bit. Utilize your free time to "catch up" around the home or socially/family and prepare for the next "semester".

Continue learning and enjoying being together. Learning never stops. If you have been wanting to really educate your children rather than just doing "school at home", the summer is the perfect time for you to read and explore books with your children, and fill your days with meaningful discussions and conversation. Keep a record of all the things you talk about and do each week, and you will be amazed at how much everyone learns!

Enjoy the break from regular academics and find new extra "learning" experiences. Ones that give you time together as a family and your children don't realize that they are being taught. They only know their having fun.

Don't let the learning stop! Create a more relaxed, but fun environment for learning. Challenge your kids to ask more questions when you're out on field trips or camping, etc. Have them keep a nature or summer journal to write or draw the things they are discovering whether in the backyard or on vacation. You'll be amazed at how wide open their eyes will be hunting for new facts!

Do the fun stuff, but don't neglect entirely things that are easily forgotten in those months....you will be happier when the 'new' school year begins! There will not be a need for so much review and re-learning :o) Math and reading are most necessary.

Use baking and cooking during the summer for lessons in measurements/fractions. Our daughter learned more about understanding fractions in the kitchen that she ever understood from texts and manipulatives.

Choose a few great books (there are resources such as the 1,000 Great Books list, or Let the Author's Speak to name two for ideas on choices) and make a plan to read EVERY day from your book. It does not matter when.....before bedtime is great, or a rainy day depending on your work schedule. I like to have a book that is difficult for our 10 yo to read (so that he grows accustomed to hearing unfamiliar words and phrases) that I read to him. I also have a book that is just at his level to read out loud to me.

This way he enjoys this reading time thoroughly b/c he does not struggle with too many new words. We save those for *reading lessons* time :).

Learning isn't just a "school months" activity. Kids need to be showed how they can learn for themselves. I bring my kids to the library religiously hoping that they too will grow to LOVE books.

We split our "summer break" up throughout the year. Don't be afraid to arrange your schooltime to best suite your needs. If you need the time "off" during the holiday season, use "summer break" time then.

Pick one academic subject to continue -- I recommend math because it is the subject that is most easily forgotten over a break, but pick one and continue it just to keep the brain cells lubricated in that way.

We pretty much home educate all year, we take breaks all throughout the year. However, during breaks we try to continue w/ the basics -3R's since they are really the foundation of learning and seem to be "lost" the easiest... especially math. We try to make it fun and we may explore an interest during our breaks, like visiting more museums or the beach or national parks.

Relax and enjoy yourself. The most important thing you can teach your kids as homeschooling parents is taught by our daily treatment of each other. If we let our kids explore and try new things without too much nagging, we will build strong, character- filled people who will be successful.

Don't pack it so full that your exhausted at the end of August.

Relax, Refresh, Renew and Regroup for the next year! Get together with other homeschoolers that encourage and exhort you to be your BEST.

I have found that when we do take a summer break my children are a little behind in the fall and they usually complain about starting back up. I have decided not to take breaks in the summer, instead we do a very laid back homeschool. This changes everything for my children! They do not complain about getting more subjects in the fall, they expect it. They also are not behind at all, instead they are WAY ahead of where we left off the previous "year". We use to take breaks in the summer, but now there is also no pressure to rush and finish anything! Skipping summer break has also changed how me and my husband view our homeschool, we look for more opportunities to teach, and make things more fun for the children! My husband just made a comment yesterday about how our children are "nerds", he took us all to a historical park and all our children [ages 1 1/2 , 3,5,7 & 12] were screaming and jumping up and down because they were so excited!

Don't feel compelled to follow the public school routine of a 2-3 month break. We take multiple breaks through the year and save our outdoor, messy, hands-on lessons for summer. Then we spend the entire summer "playing" at school. It feels like a break for the kids, while making the rest of the year a little less hectic. We do keep a regular daily routine of Math review and Reading, but don't spend hours at a table. We use games to recall multiplication facts explore logic. We spend time each night as a family reading aloud or quietly before bed (not having a tv at our summer cabin helps this routine tremendously...it makes me want to get rid of our tv at home!!)

Keep their minds busy. Do some sort of math at least 3-5 days a week so that their skills stay sharp and you don't spend the first weeks of the new school year, reviewing. Try a unit study where you all learn together about something. It doesn't take a lot of planning, just assign everyone a topic and let them go to work. Do anything you wanted to do during the school year, but felt too pressured by the basics and record keeping, to do. You can always put it in the records in the fall.

Take enough break to really feel recharged--mom and kids. Don't take so much of a break that you wind up reteaching a whole bunch of stuff in the fall. If you live in the south, consider taking a "split break" on both sides of the summer heat and have school in July and August when it is really too hot and buggy to have fun outside--esp. if you don't have a pool.

Relax and don't think of school for at least a month. Then give yourself the following month to think, pray and decide what you'll be doing next year.

Enjoy every minute of the time together and keep the summer as stress free as possible. Encourage children to play outdoors and use their imaginations as much as possible.

Don't insist on a lot of paperwork. Do take many photos and make a summer memory/learning book.

Use the sunshine, the garden and your local sports facilities to get out and about and you will see positive results in the classroom. Also if you have put in a good long period of schooling maybe take a break and enjoy some down time just enjoying being a family.

If you have small children just learning to read or do math facts, remember to review somehow (try to keep it fun like a game) over the summer. It is so discouraging to realize that they "lost it" all over the summer from lack of practice. Older children may also need practice with math facts. Also, be sure to participate in other fun learning activities such as gardening, field trips, service projects, Scripture memorization, house/yard cleaning, etc. These types of activities keep the kids in the learning mode while allowing them to have a little more fun and be a little bit more free. Also, don't forget to get your books, lesson plans (or at least an idea of what you will teach and how), science experiment materials, and other such things ready for the next school year. This gives you the chance to get familiar with next year's materials instead of having you try to work hard to stay a little ahead of your students all year!

Don't stop entirely. We take a break while the kids attend camp. When we come back, we are on our summer schedule. The kids go out to play in the cooler morning hours and we do school in the afternoon when it's too hot to be outside.

Don't get lazy! Take a breather, slow down the pace and relax, but slowly start planning for the fall. Just enjoy taking a break, however brief. Make plans to do special "summer-only" activities that your children can look forward to each year.

TAKE A BREAK!! Some parents are so focused on having "Super Kids" that they forget that everyone needs to relax, breathe and enjoy each other. A breather gets everyone ready to dive in to a new school year with enthusiasm. Get hooked up with your local library's reading program. They have great ways

to encourage kids to read, often with little prizes along the way. My kids spend 1/2 of their summer reading books they enjoy, and I can hear the difference in their vocabularies by the summer's end. When traveling with younger kids, we get books on tape (well, CD these days) so that the children (and Mom and Dad) can listen to good stories as the miles pass by.

Seriously consider if a summer break is what your family needs, or if that is what you are used to. It may seem like a nice break for you, but in the long run, it may be more trouble than it's worth.

Take the break and don't stress! When it feels right then do school. But don't try to prove anything by doing school. Some summer it may click. A break is better.

Don't worry about a little backsliding. We've seen a little backsliding in some subjects, but in others we've often seen more progress, even though we haven't been making the conscious effort.

Remember that learning is a part of every day life. Even if you aren't using books during the time off from school, take advantage of the opportunities around you to learn and teach.

Stay in tune with your children, I would never leave out devotions and reading aloud!

ENJOY the break!! Be proud of your accomplishments from the recently completed year of homeschooling. Take time each week during summer break to do some prep work for the next school year...it just makes it easier to get back into teaching full-throttle when the school year begins again. Enjoy it. Budget your time well because it is easy to let it slip by and wonder where the time went. Use at least part of your break to plan for the upcoming school year so when it comes you can start well.

Make sure your "break" is just from formal school work and NOT from discipline or from God...!

Every family is different--do what YOU need to do!

Recognize that it will be hard to start up again, so plan to start just a few mornings a week, and build up your week. Don't stress, homeschooling happens even when you don't realize it.

Don't worry about trying to force opportunities to still learn over the summer. So many things happen naturally that there will be plenty of opportunities to take a "learning moment."

Play! Play! Play outside as a family!! Observe nature together.

Don't call it a break. Our children think school is part of most days, and it's easiest not to change that too much.

Look for ways to extend on what you've been studying or preview what you will study next year in a "real world" context. Showing kids how the things they are studying apply to life makes them seem more relevant and valuable and is also a sneaky way to keep things fresh in their minds. :)

Starting a loose schedule about a week before "summer break" ends helps ease the transition back for both Mom and children. It also gives you a "heads up" on what character issues might need to be addressed the coming school year. :-)

First and foremost I'd say go with the flow of what you think will work for your family. If it doesn't work perfectly, you'll naturally make changes here and there. It took our family about 3 years of homeschooling to actually figure out what that looked like in our house. As far as what has worked for OUR family, I'd recommend at least keeping to 1-3 subjects throughout the summer. And for the free time, you might consider scheduling it to some extent. Certain times for meals, sitting and eating together, certain time-frames for chores, for outside play, maybe quiet time, prayers, actually make the days run more smoothly and not get hectic and rowdy. Also, look into what your community offers. Many library districts offer more to families during the days in the summer. Free summer concerts are common. And even free days at museums, zoos or other places of interest. Plan several outings, maybe once a week to keep the fun feeling of summer break and have a little twist to your normal schooling routine. Lastly, don't try to do EVERYTHING you find out about! It seems the longer we school the MORE and MORE we find out is available to us. Almost everything sounds just wonderful and excitingly educational for the kids. The kids will get a marvelously fine education without doing EVERYTHING available to them. In fact, they may have a BETTER education with a little time to breath the fresh air and simply think and play.

When our children were young and active, I liked to have the holidays planned out with an excursion or activity for each day. Now that they are older we all enjoy the break and a time to relax and do some of the things we just don't usually get the time for... I guess its good to develop traditions.. we have certain things that we always do during the summer break. There are always lots of community events going on so it's worth checking with the library. Can be lots of fun to have some theme days. Again, when they were younger, I used to stock up on craft books and craft materials, and always had some idea up my sleeve.

They think they're taking a break because they are doing something fun. I let my kids know learning is fun by the fun things they do and still learn while having fun.

**Pick a date and stop even if books & workbooks aren't finished.
Stop for at least two weeks to recharge.**

Relax and enjoy, really soak up lots of non- homeschool time filled with learning and you'll find your children will 'learn' so much more than you ever expected.

Make a plan of little by little de-cluttering the school materials and label things you put away. Throw away what you don't need, give away those good materials that just don't fit in your homeschooling but others can benefit from them. AND REST (this one is good at all times though :)

Here's the truth. Our first year of homeschooling I set the year up just like the public school time set. The next year, I was able to break away from my extremely traditional mindset and set the year up to better fit our family and climate. So we actually start our school year the first week of July (it's too hot outside to do much anyway except maybe go swimming). This leaves us with some time to enjoy the

more comfortable weather outside in the fall either to have a school break or go on field trips. We try to finish our school work by May so we can enjoy a little springtime outside. So our summer break is basically May and June, give or take a few days.

Pray and ask for wisdom what type of break is best for YOUR family, THIS year.



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