

Oh, and of course, the things to do once you're there—we don't want you Googling "what the heck to do in nature," just diving into the family-friendly action!

Welcome to Camp Adventure

We've got some serious scout-inspired ideas for getting in touch with nature. City folks, prepare to flee the concrete jungle with kids in tow; suburbanites, all those green surroundings were one of the reasons you chose to raise a family here—now take advantage of them, will ya?

1 Join the nation-wide campout.

Pitch a tent in your backyard, neighborhood, a park, or campground to make a difference for America's native animals. As part of its efforts to inspire Americans to protect wildlife, the National Wildlife Federation is hosting its 10th annual **Great American Backyard Campout** on June 28. This year's campout is part of NWF's 10 Million Kids Outdoors campaign, a three-year initiative that seeks to get 10 million children to spend time outside every day, creating a generation of happier and healthier children with a greater connection to nature. This year, NWF aims to have more than 200,000 participants camp out, and, with the NWF's board of directors and other friends donating \$2 per participant to the organization's conservation work, raise up to \$400,000. For more information about how to get involved, plus camping tips, visit backyardcampout.org.

2 Light a campfire.

There are many ways to build and start a campfire, but the four things you always need are tinder (small twigs, dry leaves, or grass to catch the spark), kindling (small sticks that burn easily), fuel (larger pieces of wood to feed the fire), and a spark source. Try building a tepee, cross, lean-to, or log cabin—visit smokebear.com/build-campfire.asp for tips—and igniting the fire with a hand drill, two-man friction drill, bow drill, or flint and steel. Just remember to never leave a fire unattended, keep it small, never use branches or leaves from live trees, and keep an eye on children and pets. Oh, and check out these [delicious s'mores ideas](#).

3 Go stargazing.

And if it's raining or cloudy—read: no visible stars—check out these equally engaging [local planetariums](#)!

4 Host a bake sale.

Take a page from the Girl Scout handbook and sell sweet treats for a good cause by hosting a **Share Our Strength Bake Sale for No Kid Hungry**. The national fundraising initiative, which encourages people to host bake sales in their communities to help end childhood hunger, is presented by Domino Sugar, C&H Sugar, and Duncan Hines. Register your bake sale at bake.nokidhungry.org to receive a free bake sale toolkit, find a participating bake sale in your area, and find bake sale resources, including tips for a successful endeavor, flyer templates, and recipes.

5 Use crickets to gauge the weather.

Using a watch with a second hand, count the number of times a cricket chirps in 14 seconds, and add 40. The total is the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit, according to *The Old Farmer's Almanac*.

6 Prepare your child through play.

If your family has never been camping, engaging young children in pretend play can give them an idea of what to expect when you head to the campground. With the **Playmobil Camp Site** (\$69.99) and **Family Camping Trip** (\$18.99) play sets, children will be exposed to concepts—sleeping in a tent, cooking over a fire, using outdoor bathrooms, or the idea of being unplugged—that might be foreign them. (Ages 4-10)

7 Tie a few knots.

A lot of what you do when camping—hanging food in the trees to protect it from wild animals, fishing, securing rain covers—requires some basic knot-tying skills. Download **Animated Knots by Grog** (named the best knot-tying app by *Outdoor Magazine*) to your Apple device (also available for **Android** users) to instantly access easy-to-understand instructions and demos for virtually every knot you'll need, including the anchor hitch, arbor knot, slip knot, and the decorative cobra lanyard knot. (\$4.99; iTunes)

8 Find your way with a compass.

Orienteering is a competitive form of land navigation—people race on a course they find by using a map and compass. An orienteering compass has seven basic parts: the baseplate, direction-of-travel arrow, magnetic needle (the red end always points to the Earth's magnetic north), index line, orienting arrow, orienting lines, and compass housing with degree dial. Let's say, for instance, that you want to travel southeast. Hold the compass flat in your hand and spin the compass housing, which has the four cardinal directions on it, so that southeast is in line with the direction-of-travel arrow. Then, while still holding the compass flat in your hand, turn yourself until the red end of the magnetic arrow is lined up with north in the orienting arrow—the orienting arrow moves with the compass housing so it is always in line with north. Double-check that the red end is pointed toward north on the compass housing, otherwise you'll head in the wrong direction! Once you are sure the arrow is lined up correctly, walk in the direction that the direction-of-travel arrow is pointing.



9 Prepare for outdoor adventure.

Before starting any scout-inspired activities, take a cue from the motto shared by the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts: Be prepared.

- Learn what insect repellent you should buy and how to take care of a sting at nymetroparents.com/bug-bites.
- Wear SPF 30 sunscreen and reapply every 45 minutes if you're in the water or sweating.
- Keep plenty of water on hand. Find tips to prevent and detect dehydration at nymetroparents.com/hydrate.
- Pack gear for all weathers—you never know when it'll rain or get chilly.
- Learn basic first aid and bring a first-aid kit that will provide care for everyone in your group.

10 Learn how to build a shelter.

Knowing how to pitch a tent is an essential skill to have before going camping. For a simple seven-step guide to pitch a tent from *Boys' Life*, the official publication of the Boy Scouts of America, visit nymetroparents.com/pitch-tent. If you're a little more adventurous, learn how to build a survival shelter from materials you can find in the woods at nymetroparents.com/survival-shelter.

11 Become an equestrian.

From building muscles and increasing balance, coordination, visual-spatial skills, and reflexes to learning patience, care, respect, and responsibility, horseback riding has many benefits for your developing children. Find a stable near you that offers children's riding lessons at nymetroparents.com/horseback-riding.

12 Find a hidden treasure.

Geocaching is a modern-day, real-world scavenger hunt that combines modern orienteering, hiking (sometimes), and the great outdoors. Learn the rules of geocaching and find a treasure hunt in your area at nymetroparents.com/geocaching.

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Kids can pretend to heat up some food in the pots and pans on the hot plate or grab a drink from the cooler in this Playmobil Family Camping Trip set.

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Reel 'em in.

A simple fishing pole and a bucket of worms might bring back memories of mellow weekends with your own dad ([click here for ideas on replicating those memories](#)) but true-blue fly-fishing gear is as likely to intimidate. In an effort to make the sport more accessible, Patagonia recently launched its **Simple Fly Fishing** campaign and a family-minded starter kit inspired by company founder Yvon Chouinard's visit to Japan years ago. The centuries-old technique she learned and the tenkara fly rod, which has no reel, make it easier—and cheaper—to fly-fish. "This is for the young person who has wanted to learn, but is intimidated by the complexity, elitism, and expense of fly-fishing," Chouinard says, "and for the long-time angler who has everything and wants to replace all that stuff with skill, knowledge, and simplicity."

Jeremy Koreski

This Simple Fly Fishing kit (\$255-\$280; patagonia.com) comes with a tenkara-style fishing rod, a box of 12 flies, a set-up guide, line and leader, and *Simple Fly Fishing: Techniques for Tenkara Rod and Reel* by Yvon Chouinard, Craig Mathews, and Mauro Mazzo.



Indulging Their Dinosaur Obsession

Now is the time for pint-sized paleontologists to explore their passion, with dinos making tracks everywhere from Brooklyn to New Haven, CT...even in your own home.

14 Set up an egg hunt.

Why should Easter be the only time kids get to hunt for eggs? **Make papier-mâché dinosaur eggs** and hide them around the house or use them as a server for treats at a party or play date. Cover a balloon with papier-mâché ([follow this simple how-to on YouTube](#)), leave to dry, then “split” the egg—cut it in half or roughly split it to look like a broken egg shell. Paint the eggs with some Jurassic color choices—think muddy greens, browns, and yellows. Your kids will still be bragging about this adventure when school rolls around.

15 Make play-dough fossils.

Roll out a half-inch-thick, flat round of play dough, then have kids press their plastic toy dinosaurs into it to make a full-body impression or footprint “fossils.”

16 Roam Prehistoric New Jersey.

Along with the world’s largest animatronic dinosaur, a 90-foot Argentinosaurus (visible from the top of the Empire State Building!), **Field Station: Dinosaurs** is home to a host of lifelike dinos and offers a slew of immersive outdoor programs. Situated on 20 acres of New Jersey Meadowlands at the base of a 150-year-old rock formation, the site boasts breathtaking views, live shows, games, workshops, a fossil dig site, and overnight activities. Approximately 9 miles from New York City, this park makes for an awesome family outing. May 24–Nov. 2. At the door: \$25; \$20 seniors and children ages 3–12. In advance (online or via phone): \$20; \$17.50 seniors and children ages 3–12. Kids younger than 3 are always free.

1 Dinosaur Way, Secaucus, NJ. 855-999-9010. [fieldstationdinosaurs.com](#).

Find out more at [nymetroparents.com/nj-dinos](#).

17 Pick a paleo page-turner.

Why not make dinosaurs the theme for your next family reading day? Pick up a copy of *Scaly Spotted Feathered Frilled: How Do We Know What Dinosaurs Really Looked Like?* (ages 9–12; \$17.99; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) and read about how scientists and artists work together to posit what dinosaurs may have looked like. Did raptors have feathers? What did the skin of a T. rex really feel like? How do scientists take a bunch of bones and fill in the blanks? Find out through vivid illustrations and easy-to-understand explanations from real-life paleontologists.



18 Spot dinosaurs at the zoo.

Travel back in time to encounter more than 30 lifelike specimens in their “natural” habitats on the **Dinosaur Safari: Mysteries Revealed** narrated safari ride at the Bronx Zoo. You’ll discover how scientists reconstruct the past through examination of fossils, and upon returning to the present you can excavate your own fossils and enjoy other dinosaur-themed activities throughout the zoo. April 12–Nov. 2. Weekdays 10am–5pm; weekends 10am–5:30pm. \$16.95; \$14.95 seniors ages 65 and older; \$11.95 for children ages 3–12; free for children ages 2 and younger. Parking: \$14 per car. Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd., Bronx. 718-367-1010. [bronxzoo.com](#).



Julie Larsen Maher

Rainy Day Dino Fun

Walking With Dinosaurs: Watch in awe and learn a ton as the greatest creatures ever to walk the Earth interact with one another in this one-of-a-kind show that brings to life 20 true-to-life-size dinosaurs. This indoor show is a must-see for any dinosaur devotee. Brooklyn: June 16–20. See website for show times. \$35–\$99. Barclays Center, 620 Atlantic Ave., Prospect Heights/Park Slope. 917-618-6700. [barclayscenter.com](#). Newark, NJ: July 23–26. See website for show times. \$35–\$69.50. Prudential Center, 25 Lafayette St., Newark, NJ. 973-757-6246. [prucenter.com](#).

Tiny Titans: Dinosaur Eggs and Babies: Even the biggest behemoths start out as babies. Find out what your favorite dinosaurs were like when they were little at the Yale Peabody Museum. Through hands-on displays, life-like models, artwork, and more than 150 dinosaur eggs, this unique exhibit provides visitors with a peek into the early lives of these magnificent creatures. Open through Aug. 30. Monday–Saturday 10am–5pm; Sunday 12–5pm. \$9; \$8 seniors; \$5 students with ID and children ages 3–18. Yale Peabody Museum, 170 Whitney Ave., New Haven, CT. 203-432-5050. [peabody.yale.edu](#).

Pterosaurs: Flight in the Age of Dinosaurs: Take flight with the pterosaurs with this new exhibit that exclusively explores the dinosaurs that ruled the prehistoric skies. Get in on the action with a virtual flight simulation as well as rare fossils from Germany, the United States, and Brazil, plus casts, life-size models, and videos. Open daily through January 2015. 10am–5:45pm. \$25; \$19 seniors ages 65 and older; \$14.50 students; free for children younger than 12. American Museum of Natural History, 200 Central Park West, Upper West Side. 212-769-5200. [amnh.org](#).



Just miles from Midtown Manhattan, Field Station: Dinosaurs is home to this mighty Tyrannosaurus rex.

Tastes of Summer

We serve up more than a dozen ways to feed the family al fresco.

Give a thumbs-up to seconds of this snack.

Kids expend even more energy than usual in the heat of summer, so we're never surprised when they ask for yet *another* snack—we're just tired of saying "no" and pushing fruit.

So say "yes" to more than one of **Ruby's Rockets Fruit & Vegetable Pops**. Don't cringe—they're really, truly yummy, and yes, they're packed with veggies. Our taste-testers young and old loved the mildly sweet dairy- and gluten-free pops that are made from recognizable ingredients including beets and strawberries ("rock-it red"), carrots and sweet potatoes ("orbit orange"), and spinach and kiwi ("galaxy green"). Ruby's Rockets are essentially frozen smoothies of the healthiest variety; there's no added sugar (only 4 grams of sugar per pop) and each pop has no more than 35 calories. So go ahead and have a few yourself! (\$5.99 per box)

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20 Host a Fourth of July barbecue.

If you're planning a July 4th get-together, check out an Independence Day-worthy menu by Lori Lange, founder of RecipeGirl.com, that includes teriyaki burgers, a triple berry salad with sugared almonds, pound cake and strawberry skewers, plus blueberry margaritas at nymetroparents.com/july-4th-menu.

What's a vegetarian or vegan to do at a barbecue? Try this light and seasonal main dish by a vegan chef (it also makes a great side dish for meat-eaters!), for starters, then find more meatless recipes at nymetroparents.com/vegan-bbq.

Veggie Shish Kebabs with Basil Dip and Spicy Salsa

Layer blocks of smoked tofu and pieces of your favorite vegetables onto skewers, sprinkle with olive oil and sea salt, and grill to your desired doneness. Then serve with these delicious dipping sauces:

Basil Dip:

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|--------------------------|---|
| 1 cup blanched almonds | ½ teaspoon sea salt |
| 1 bunch basil | 5 pitted black olives |
| 1 garlic clove | 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice |
| 6½ tablespoons olive oil | |

1. Toast the almonds in a dry skillet for approximately 1 minute.
2. Wash the basil, shake dry, and pluck off the leaves.
3. Peel the garlic and purée with all other ingredients in a blender.

Spicy Salsa:

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| 2 red onions | 1 tablespoon agave syrup |
| 4 garlic cloves | 2 vine-ripened tomatoes |
| 1 thumb-size piece of ginger | 4 tablespoons soy sauce |
| ½ red bell pepper | 1 pinch cinnamon |
| 2 tablespoons olive oil | Sea salt |
| ½ red chili pepper (a little under 1 inch) | Freshly ground black pepper |
| 2 rounded teaspoons tomato paste | |

1. Peel the onions, garlic, and ginger. Wash the bell pepper and chili pepper, and remove the seeds from both. Finely chop the onions, garlic, ginger, bell pepper, and chili pepper.
2. Heat the olive oil in a skillet and sauté the onions, garlic, ginger, and bell pepper for 3 minutes. Add the tomato paste and the agave syrup, stir, and allow to caramelize for 1 minute.
3. Wash and finely chop the tomatoes. Add the tomatoes, the remaining ingredients, and 2 tablespoons water to the skillet, cook for 2 minutes, and season with salt and pepper.

Excerpted with permission from "*Vegan for Fun*" by Attila Hildmann (\$34.99; Becker Joest Volk Verlag).



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21 Create a mouth-watering menu with watermelon.

Sweet and hydrating (it's 92 percent water!), watermelon is the perfect fruit to munch on in balmy summer weather. Snack on a classic seedless slice or spice things up with this recipe, ideal for a summer gathering. You'll also find more recipes, including satisfying shrimp watermelon satay, courtesy of the National Watermelon Promotion Board at nymetroparents.com/watermelon.

Watermelon Crunch Salsa

- 4 cups ¼-inch cubed seedless watermelon
- 2 cups ¼-inch cubed jicama
- 1 cup ¼-inch cubed carrots
- 2 cups minced purple cabbage
- 1 cup minced sweet yellow banana or bell peppers
- ¼ cup minced fresh parsley
- Fresh squeezed lime juice from 6 limes
- Sea salt to taste

Prepare each ingredient and toss together just before serving. Serves 12-16 as a salad or salsa.

22 Brew refreshing caffeine-free sun tea.

23 Choose a restaurant with outdoor seating.

Bonus points if you've never eaten there before! And extra bonus points if you bring along Fido (just call ahead to make sure the restaurant allows animals in its outdoor area).

Make nontraditional s'mores around an actual campfire.

To date no one seems to know who actually started toasting marshmallows over a campfire. It was probably some camp counselor who couldn't stand heating up another can of pork and beans. It's certainly in the United States where most are now consumed, in any case—90 million pounds per year, to be exact. The majority of those consumers are, no surprise, younger than 12. Truth is, most parents loathe the making of s'mores on camping trips. The gooey mess gets all over kids' clothes, making them bear bait for the rest of the evening. Try these not-so-sticky recipes for a campy change-up:

24 S'More Crepes

S'mores are pretty much downgraded versions of a fancy French crepe. Spread chocolate-hazelnut spread on a soft tortilla, sprinkle confectioners' sugar and coconut shavings on top, roll up in a piece of foil, and roast in the campfire or Dutch oven.

25 Mexican S'Mores

Spread a generous amount of peanut butter on a soft tortilla, add a layer of chocolate chips and mini marshmallows, and then roll up the tortilla. Wrap it in foil and cook over a fire or on a grill for just under 5 minutes. Unwrap and eat with a spoon.

26 Squirty S'Mores

Toast a marshmallow over the fire and then, without removing it from the stick, roll it in a pie plate a quarter full of Hershey's chocolate syrup and crushed graham crackers.

Planning a family camping trip? Get 10 tips for campfire cooking at nymetroparents.com/campfire.

Excerpted with permission from "The New Trailside Cookbook: 100 Delicious Recipes for the Camp Chef" by Kevin Callan and Margaret Howard (\$19.95; Firefly Books 2014).

27 Find a food truck.

If you're in the city, you're bound to find one just around the corner. If the 'burbs are home, your closest bet may be your local ice cream truck. Tweet us your best food truck discovery, [@NYMetroParents](https://twitter.com/NYMetroParents) #FoodTruck.

28 Make a cardboard box oven.

Yes, you read that right—with a little tin foil and tape, you can transform a cardboard box into a working oven. Some versions call for charcoal while others depend on solar power, but whichever you choose, you should be able to bake just about anything you normally would in your kitchen at home. It's a nifty afternoon project that could come in handy on a camping trip or on those hot summer days when you don't want to bake indoors. Find instructions on how to make one of these ovens, courtesy of the blog Like Mom and Apple Pie, at nymetroparents.com/box-oven.

29 Pick and chew.

Summer is berry season, and none taste better than those you've plucked straight from the bush. Find a pick-your-own farm near you at nymetroparents.com/berries.

30 Have an outdoor tea party.

Whether the tea is real or imaginary is up to you!

31 Enjoy a treat at the fair.

Street fairs and county fairs alike serve up many special treats (see: corn dogs, cotton candy, funnel cake). Worried about the nutrition in these delicacies? See our guide to healthy summer eating at nymetroparents.com/summer-eating, which will help you make the healthiest food choices wherever you venture.

32 Visit a farmers' market.

Shop for local produce at a farmers' market or greenmarket near you. Bring the kids, of course, so they can see where their food comes from and maybe even meet the farmers who grow the delicious ingredients in their dinners.

33 Plan a picnic in the park.

Skip the picnic basket and fancy napkins. Rather, keep the focus on together time by opting for a big, comfy blanket and shareable snacks such as chopped fruit and cheese and crackers. ([Check out our favorite seasonal blanket pick here.](#))

34 Grab a bar and go.

With all of the activity ideas in this issue, you're sure to go on a lot of outdoor adventures this summer. Don't let hunger pangs slow you down—load up your bag with these handy finger snacks that are perfect for little hands and filling for tiny tummies.

Sunflower Oat Bars (Makes 12)

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus extra for greasing
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce (optional)
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- 1½ cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 cups rolled oats

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 7-inch square baking pan and line the base and sides with a sheet of parchment paper, creasing the paper at the corners.
2. Put the melted butter, eggs, Worcestershire sauce (if using), and half the sunflower seeds in a large bowl and mix together well.
3. Add the cheese and oats and mix together until evenly combined. Spoon the mixture into the prepared pan and level the top, then sprinkle with the remaining seeds.
4. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes until the cheese is bubbling and the top is just pale golden. Let cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then cut into 12 bars. Store in an airtight container for up to two days.

Recipe excerpted with permission from "Ella's Kitchen: The Big Baking Book" (\$19.99; Hamlyn 2014).



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17 Ways to a Greener Thumb



Equip your tot with his own tools.

The **Garden Tote & Tools** (\$16.95) and **Metal Watering Can** (\$8.95) from For Small Hands are designed with small gardeners in mind. The canvas garden tote is roomy enough for tools, seed packets, gloves, and anything else a gardener may need and comes with a spade, rake, and trowel. Plus, when your children grow out of the tote and watering can, you can turn them into small container gardens—just like their out-grown boots!

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36 Stimulate the senses with the top 20 plants for kids.

In addition to being a fruitful hobby, gardening has health benefits for kids and adults. Gardening outside promotes movement (walking, squatting, and lifting), and you'll get plenty of vitamin D—just remember to wear sunscreen! It also “connects us with nature, which has been shown to work wonders for children having a hard time focusing,” says Renata Fossen Brown in *Gardening Lab for Kids: 52 Fun Experiments to Learn, Grow, Harvest, Make, Play, and Enjoy Your Garden* (\$24.99; Cool Springs Press). Gardening can be therapeutic, and it stimulates all five senses, which is beneficial for many children with special needs. The following 20 plants are ideal in children's gardens because “they have personality, fragrance, texture, and color—vibrant color. They grow quickly—something kids need in response to their work,” says Sharon Lovejoy in her book *Roots Shoots Buckets & Boots* (\$13.95; Workman Publishing): pumpkins, sunflowers, gourds, corn, berries, hollyhocks, carrots, mimosa, poppies, tomatoes, trees, alliums, potatoes, woolly lamb's ear, four-o'clocks, evening primroses, radishes, nasturtium, moon plant, and lemon verbena. Learn why Lovejoy chose these plants for children, and how your kids can incorporate them in their everyday life, at nymetroparents.com/kids-plants.

37 Create a galoshes garden.

Has your tot outgrown his favorite puddle jumpers? Don't give them away; make them into a pair of mini gardens!

Materials:

An old pair of boots
Seedlings
Potting soil
Nylon screening
Drill

Directions:

1. Drill drainage holes in the soles of the boots, and lay nylon screening inside boots to cover the holes.
2. Fill boots with soil and plant seedlings.
3. Place boots in a spot that receives 4 to 6 hours of sunlight daily.
4. To see if your mini gardens need water, push your finger into the soil and water plants if soil feels dry.

We discovered this idea in *Roots Shoots Buckets & Boots* by Sharon Lovejoy, a font of unique family gardening suggestions and helpful tips.

38 Become a guerrilla gardener.

If you're too impatient to tend to a garden, or don't have a plot of land to call your own, here's a thought: Toss seed grenades! First used centuries ago by farmers to ensure their precious seeds were protected from birds, insects, sun, and wind until rainfall caused them to germinate, these blooming bombs were most recently utilized by guerrilla gardening pioneer Liz Christy, who threw wildflower seed grenades into fenced-off vacant lots around her New York neighborhood. Learn how to make seed grenades out of clay, papier-mâché, and eggshells at nymetroparents.com/seed-grenades.

While harvesting the fruits of your labor is an enjoyable aspect of gardening, spending time with your kids outside is perhaps the most important.

39 Relish in your family's lush garden.

To ensure gardening is a successful and enjoyable experience for your children, keep these tips in mind:

- **Start modestly:** If this is your first experience with gardening, you don't need to create a huge backyard garden with every kind of vegetable. Start with a small plot or a small Square Foot Garden—a form of gardening that uses a raised planter filled with a special soil mix and divided into 1-square-foot sections that each house a different plant—with your child's favorite vegetables. “Kids should grow only what you're sure they can and will eat, or can easily give away,” says Mel Bartholomew in his book *Square Foot Gardening with Kids* (\$24.95; Cool Springs Press). Once you have a successful first season, add to your garden size—that is, if you feel you can keep up with it.
- **Involve the child:** Every step, from planning to “planting, growing, nurturing, to the final harvest, represents a chance for kids to be involved, have fun, and learn,” Bartholomew says. “Even if they can't do everything themselves, don't do it for them”; give an assist.
- **Reinforce the benefits:** When your child picks a vegetable she grew in her garden, “don't just pat her on the head and say, ‘That's nice dear.’ Get excited too,” says Bartholomew, who pioneered Square Foot Gardening 40 years ago. Find a recipe that uses the picked vegetable and make it for dinner that night to show your gardener how valuable her harvest is, he suggests.
- **Look for lessons:** Use gardening as a teaching tool, “but pick the lessons that won't dampen children's enthusiasm,” Bartholomew says. Ask young gardeners what colors they see and have them count plants, introduce elementary-aged gardeners to photosynthesis, and get older gardeners to teach you what they've learned in school about plants.
- **Share:** “Kids love to share their successes,” Bartholomew says. So have him give a neighbor a tomato, or get him to help make a meal from his harvest for Grandma and Grandpa.

Mel Bartholomew developed Square Foot Gardening as a more manageable garden that yields 100 percent of the harvest in 20 percent of the space. Bartholomew has since brought this method to schools and begun a global outreach initiative to bring the dietary benefits of his system to Third World countries. His book “Square Foot Gardening with Kids” (ages 2 and older) covers every aspect of “SFG” and includes fun activities and lessons to get the most out of your gardening experience.



40 Grow a grassy garden gnome.

Fill your garden with gnomes—with actual growing hair!—to help watch over it and keep you company.

Materials:

1 pair knee-high nylons	Felt or foam pieces in various colors
Wide-mouth drinking glass	Paint pens
Spoon	Small clay pots
Grass seed	Small bowl
Soil	Small plastic or Styrofoam cups, such as Dixie cups
Googly eyes	
Waterproof glue, such as Gorilla Glue	

TIP: This is a messy activity, so do it outside if you can. Otherwise spread newspaper on your work surface.

Dig In!



1. Stretch one nylon stocking over the mouth of a wide drinking glass to make pouring the grass seed and soil into the nylon easy. Use a spoon to sprinkle a small handful of grass seed into the stocking.



2. Pour one to two handfuls of soil on top of the grass seed, pushing the soil all the way down to the toe. Take the nylon off of the drinking glass, and knot the nylon close to the soil to keep the soil in place. This is your gnome's head.



3. With the length of leftover nylon hanging downward, glue googly eyes onto the face area and add other facial features using the felt or foam pieces. Let the glue dry completely. Use the paint pens to paint the clay pots.



4. Fill the bowl with water and invert the gnome's head into it for several minutes. This wets the soil and grass seed and gets the seed growing.



5. Insert a small paper cup into a clay pot and fill the cup with water. Flip the gnome's head right side up and insert the loose end of the nylon into the cup. The nylon will act as a wick to pull water up and keep the grass seed watered. Place the gnome where it will get sunlight, and within a week watch for the seed “hair” to sprout!

All photos by Dave Brown

Excerpted from “*Gardening Lab for Kids: 52 Fun Experiments to Learn, Grow, Harvest, Make, Play, and Enjoy Your Garden*” (ages 5-12; \$24.99) by Renata Fossen Brown with permission from Cool Springs Press.



Shantee Hope Sutch

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41 Satisfy your child's curiosity.

Ever wonder which part of a plant grows first, what's a plant's secret weapon, or why some flowers smell bad? *How Does a Seed Sprout? and Other Questions About Plants* by Melissa Stewart, one of the newest titles in the Good Question series, answers these questions and more. The book, which is aligned with the Common Core standards, gives children basic information in a Q-and-A format with detailed illustrations and plant lifecycle infographics. (Ages 7 and older; \$5.95-\$12.95; Sterling Children's Books)

42 Get crafty.

Encourage your kids to participate in garden planning by having them create a garden map using markers, crayons, the computer, or collage.

43 Keep your pets safe!

Some plants you may be considering for your garden could be toxic to cats and dogs. Keep indoor plants out of reach of your animals, and put a fence around your outdoor garden. For the ASPCA's list of plants that are toxic and nontoxic to cats and dogs, visit nymetroparents.com/plant-guide.

44 Invite the fairies.

Did you know that fairy gardens are a thing? Search Pinterest and you'll be tickled by the magic they can bring to your plants—and we're willing to bet your princess and Peter Pan fans' interest will be piqued, too. Browse at myfairygardens.com for ideas and accessories to help you create miniature whimsical landscapes using small-scale plants.

45 Go beyond your homemade snack.

Take one sunflower seed leftover from the [Sunflower Oat Bars recipe](#) and plant it in a little pot (a yogurt container is perfect) filled with compost, suggests Paul Lindley in his new book *Ella's Kitchen: The Big Baking Book*. Ask your little one to cover the pot with plastic wrap and make a few holes in the top. Leave the pot on a sunny windowsill and when the first leaves appear, replant the sunflower in a bigger pot and leave it somewhere sunny outside. How tall will your sunflower grow?

46 Watch a seed germinate.

Place a damp paper towel in a clear plastic sandwich bag, then place a lima bean seed between the paper towel and bag. Put the bag on a windowsill that gets a lot of sunlight so the germination process can occur. Over the next several days, you'll be able to observe how a seed grows for yourself. Put a reminder in your smartphone for next year: If you do this next spring too, you can plant the germinated seed in your garden!

47 Get inspired!

Need some inspiration for what to plant in your garden, or simply like to stroll through someone else's? Go to nymetroparents.com/botanical-gardens to find gardens to visit in our area.

48 Plant a salsa garden.

A patch of constant sun and a few pots are all you need to cultivate the main ingredients for some healthy nacho fixin's. Pick up one each of cilantro, tomato, bell pepper, and jalapeño pepper plants at a nursery and repot them in organic soil. When it's harvest time, plan a Tex-Mex dinner and tap the kids to help prepare—and see whose salsa recipe gets scooped up first!

49 Record your garden's growth.

Have your child keep a journal about your garden filled with drawings of insects and plants, and observations about what they see.

50 Eat what you sow!**51 Make your own soil.**

Is a lack of yard space keeping you from your composting goal? The **All Seasons Indoor Composter** from UncommonGoods (\$48) is an in-house system of Bokashi composting that turns kitchen scraps into organic compost without the foul odor and can easily be stored in the cabinet under the sink. Each time you add food waste to the bin, top it with Bokashi (a mixture of water, wheat bran, and molasses), and the food will ferment more quickly than traditional composting. The composter also features a strainer and spigot, allowing the moisture released during the composting process to be drained and used as a nutrient-rich fertilizer for indoor and outdoor plants.

- **Do** compost vegetable scraps, grains and pastas, fruit rinds and peels, breads and cereals, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, egg shells, grass clippings, and other plant parts.
- **Don't** compost plastics, animal products, oily foods, dairy products, diseased plants, heavily coated or glossy paper, non-biodegradable materials, toxic materials, or invasive plants.



Joshua Bright

Beginning mid-July, **Wave Hill**, a 28-acre public garden in the Bronx that aims to explore human connections to the natural world through programs in horticulture, education, and the arts, will host Sunset Wednesdays and offer outdoor yoga, guided walks through the gardens, picnicking opportunities, and live music.



The 6-acre Conservatory Garden in Central Park (entrance on Fifth Avenue at 105th Street in East Harlem) features French, Italian, and English designs. The pictured Three Dancing Maidens fountain is located in the French North Garden.

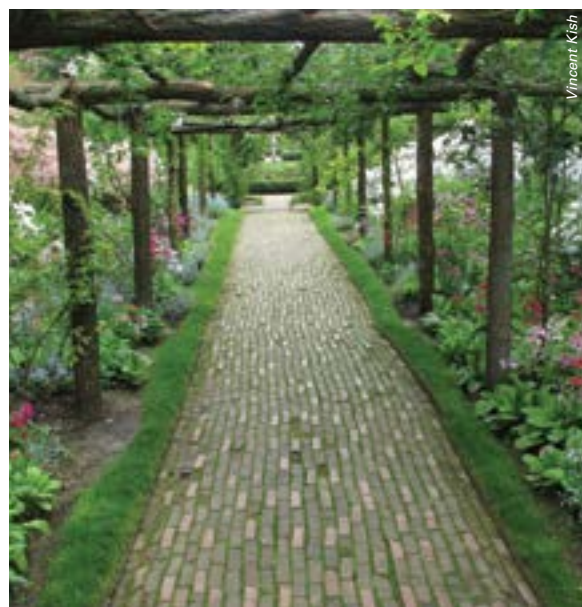


Rebecca Bullens, courtesy of Brooklyn Botanic Garden

A 52-acre "living museum" with various plant collections and special gardens, including the Herb Garden, pictured, **Brooklyn Botanic Garden** in Prospect Heights strives to teach visitors the importance of plants in our everyday lives.



The Queens Botanical Garden in Flushing hosts spring, summer, and fall gardening sessions where young gardeners can get involved by planting vegetables, herbs, and annual flowers in the Children's Garden.



Vincent Kish

A historical site, **Old Westbury Gardens** in Old Westbury features a Gold Coast mansion among 200 acres of formal gardens, landscaped grounds, woodlands, ponds, and lakes.

Splish Splash

It's wet and it's cool—need another reason to head to the water? Here are eight!

52 Find a fountain.

They're not just for posing in front of, though that's nice. Tell your kids that *Yes!*, they can run through the water—and not only in those awesome playground fountains, either. Playfully try to avoid the shooting streams of water, then splash your kids when they least expect it. Make wishes by throwing in pennies. Make dreams come true.

53 Take a wet and wild day trip.

Splash Away Bay at Quassy Amusement Park & Waterpark has enough water activities to keep you soaked all day. From a 300-gallon bucket dropping water at Saturation Station to multiple twisting, turning slides, the water never stops flowing. For a more relaxing way to get wet, hang out on Quassy Beach, 2132 Middlebury Road, Middlebury, CT; 203-758-2913; quassy.com. Find more water parks in the region in our guide to amusement parks at nymetroparents.com/amusementparks.

Bomb away. It doesn't have to be considered a water 'fight' if it's all in good fun. Get crafty before getting wet by making these water bombs out of square pieces of paper, such as pages ripped from a comic book. Follow the instructions at nymetroparents.com/water-bomb, provided courtesy of a book we highly recommend for plentiful great activities, *Boy Craft* by Sara Duchars and Sarah Marks (\$19.95; Frances Lincoln). Fill the resulting boxes with water, and look out below!

54



Float your own boat.

Does your child want to captain a ship all her own? It's possible with this DIY paper boat from *National Geographic Kids Get Outside Guide* (ages 9-12; \$14.99). All you need is paper and sticky tape to create a boat that floats! Go to nymetroparents.com/diy-boat for a complete how-to.

55



53

The Bullet Bowl at Quassy includes a plunge through a dark tunnel followed by exciting raft spins along the wall of the basin.

56



59



56 Make a splash

Backyard water games are synonymous with smiles. Enjoy the classic warm-weather activities of water balloon fights, squirt gun tag, running through a sprinkler, or playing on a slip-and-slide.

57 Row, row, row their boat.

Captain a ship (or, more likely, a rowboat, kayak, or canoe), prepare your crew, and take on the open sea—or the nearest lake. Open rowboat, kayak, and paddleboat rentals are offered throughout our region. Find a wide array of options and links to locations and vendors at nymetroparents.com/boating.

58 Hit the beach.

While sitting in traffic post-outing may be a drag, it's rarely reason enough to skip heading to the shore in the first place. It's quite simply what we do in the summer, no? So ride the waves, build a sandcastle, collect seashells, and slather on the SPF. For the best beaches in our area, visit nymetroparents.com/beaches.

59 Make tracks.

We've got a fun, portable toy to stash in your beach bag: Young kids will make their mark in the sand with **Lakeshore Learning Big Track Sand Rollers** (\$19.99 for set of six rollers; lakeshorelearning.com)—designs resemble train tracks, tire treads, cobblestone, and more.

Easy, Peasy Sundays

After a rambunctious summer Saturday, it can feel great to get back to center with a mellow Sunday. Skip the urge to hibernate—just turn down the volume on your family activities.

60 Share a sunset together.

Tell us your favorite local spots to take in the sunset—and share your pictures!—at [facebook.com/nymetroparents](https://www.facebook.com/nymetroparents) #FamilySunset.

61 Go for a spin.

Ride like the wind—or, better yet, a lazy breeze—on a vibrant, historic carousel.

Give in to your kids' requests for multiple tickets (c'mon, let them ride the stallion *and* the frog), and surprise them with trips to different carousels over the next few weeks. Take your pick from our list of area faves (and search surrounding communities if you happen to be visiting friends) at [nymetroparents.com/carousels](https://www.nymetroparents.com/carousels).

62 Set up an old-fashioned lemonade stand.

If you want to get all 21st-century about it, post notices on social media, not in the local laundromat. Just make sure to supply the kids with change!

63 Ditch all your cell phones for a day.

Talk face-to-face, read paper books, and let thoughts wander.

64 Try this on for size.

Let your kids raid their Halloween costume collection or step into your grown-up digs for a dress-up session. Take in the action from the comfort of your chaise and revel in some guaranteed Instagram hits—no one can resist cuties playing fireman or rocking Mom's high heels, after all. Bonus points for organizing a stage show (popcorn included) or helping their role-playing along by getting in on the act yourself!

65 Lighten the load.

Ah, chores. Pick a Sunday to tackle those ever-growing mounds of laundry. Forego your usual high standards for a change, and encourage the kids to race to see who can fold and stash their own clothes the fastest. Do not “check” their work—ignorance, and an empty hamper, is bliss.

66 Become al fresco bookworms.

Remember the days when you actually read the newspaper, leisurely, section by section? Find a way to get lost in reading again. Engage the whole clan. Print reading lists from your local library...and actually use them! Pick books that can span generations so a few of you can get lost in the same story together, or decide on a family theme to explore—stars, Star Wars, water... And leave the tablets inside, not only to avoid the sun glare, but to not be confronted by constant pings and rings. Being quiet together (and yet apart, imagining your own worlds) is a real gift. Go to [nymetroparents.com/summer-reading](https://www.nymetroparents.com/summer-reading) for resources.

67 Go for a post-dinner walk—the whole crew!

68 Expect slow.

When exploring nature with your kids, consider the pace—and resist the urge to speed things up. Slower can be better, advises Peter Brown Hoffmeister in his enchanting book *Let Them Be Eaten by Bears: A Fearless Guide to Taking Kids into the Great Outdoors*. “Going slowly with my daughters, I’ve discovered bull snakes I would have hiked right past. I’ve seen bald eagles arguing with each other in a tree right above our heads when we stopped for a drink of water,” Hoffmeister says. “Slower means more time for discovery.”

69 Post a sign: Gone fishin’.

Nothing says lazy, hazy days of summer like sitting on a dock waiting to hook a fish. Sure, it’s a sport, but you might even score an elusive nap from your kids if you’re lucky—just be ready to reel in their fish while they snooze. Check out our favorite fishing spots, plus get a few tips, at [nymetroparents.com/fishing](https://www.nymetroparents.com/fishing).

70 Ahhh, breathe.

Do a yoga session on the grass. The family that stretches together...

63



71 Make a blanket statement.

Keep an old sheet or, better yet, a large blanket with a water-resistant bottom, on hand—in your car trunk or near your home's door—for impromptu lounge sessions on the grass. Whether taking a few steps to your backyard or trekking blocks to the park, pack light and plan to chill: simple snacks, plenty of water and sunscreen, books and magazines (check out [highlights.com](https://www.highlights.com) for fun activity books tailored to various age ranges, from newborn to 12). Don't worry about planning a full-fledged picnic (too much pressure for a restorative Sunday)—snacks and finger foods are fun, low-key options!



Our favorite family picnic spread: This blanket from One Step Ahead folds into a compact shoulder-strap tote, has corner loops for staking, sports a waterproof bottom, and is machine-washable (\$39.95; [onestepahead.com](https://www.onestepahead.com))

72 Watch the clouds.

Lie on your backs and challenge one another to find images in the fluffy wisps above. Whose imagination rules?

73 Be nature detectives.

Give your kids a copy of the *Backyard Explorer Kit*, comprised of the *Leaf & Tree Guide* by Westchester writer Rona Beame, a leaf collecting album, and a clear plastic collecting envelope. The illustrated guide shows examples of all the major leaf and needle shapes and lists the common trees they match up with, plus explains how to press and mount the leaves. (Ages 5-10; \$11.95; Workman)

74 Flex your DIY muscles.

Spread out some glue sticks and glitter pens and check out [nymetroparents.com/kidscrafts](https://www.nymetroparents.com/kidscrafts) for a handful of projects that are easily transportable to an outdoor venue and are appropriate for varying ages and interests.

75 Fly a kite.

76 Let them be bored.

Boredom breeds creativity (after a little restlessness!)—so sit back and watch what they come up with. Keep your ideas to yourselves, Mom and Dad.

60



A Little Healthy Competition

Time for some good, clean fun! From cheering on the home team to competing alongside your kids, all our ideas for getting into the game are surefire winners.

77 Play a classic lawn game.

Chances are you're familiar with the age-old three-legged race or the limbo, but head to nymetroparents.com/lawn-games for a refresher on these and six more classic outdoor options.

78 Teach the kids a game from back in the day.

When stick ball, stoop ball, and curb ball dominated inner city streets, there was no need for a website like Manhattan mom Lenore Skenazy's popular Free Range Kids, whose mantra is "how to raise self-reliant kids—without going crazy with worry"; most kids roamed free until they were called home for supper on summer evenings. The simple joys of playing ball in the streets have gone the way of other childhood pastimes of our parents' generation—for safety reasons, most likely. But when we listen to our moms and dads recall playing curb ball "in the old neighborhood" growing up in NYC, we're transported...and happy. Even if it's challenging to find an open and safe area with a curb, teach your kids the fundamentals of the game as you remember it.

To refresh your memory: Hit the spaldeen against the sharp edge of the curb causing it to fly up as high as possible. The fielder must catch it on the fly to get an out, otherwise the number of bounces determines if it is a single, double, or triple; four bounces is a homerun. No bases are run. After three outs, an inning is over. Like baseball, a nine-inning game was usually played.

Alternative: Make up the rules as your family goes along. And use whatever surface lends itself—make up step ball, or play against a wall. As native New Yorker Gregory Christiano reflects about growing up in the Bronx in the '50s, "Rules governing street games were basic and simple to learn. Everyone seemed to know them, even instinctively.... The children set the parameters of the rules and settled their own disputes usually fairly and accurately without too many fistfights." Imagine that.



Watch the New York Mutals play "base ball" 1864-style at the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum in the Bronx, which hosts this old-fashioned game every year on Father's Day weekend.

81



79 Bounce old-school.

If you want to serve up your nostalgic stick ball lesson with a dose of veracity, pick up an original spaldeen, currently known as the Spalding High-Bounce ball (\$2.49; sportsunlimitedinc.com), coined "spaldeen" by New Yorkers whose thick accents mangled "Spalding."



80 Keep score at croquet.

It may be an old-fashioned lawn game, but it's fun—and this animal-themed croquet set from Lakeshore Learning can be used inside when the weather's not cooperating, too. (Ages 4-10; \$49.99; lakeshorelearning.com)

81 Take them out to the (vintage) ball game.

You may know the game of baseball pretty well, but what about base ball? The sport was spelled differently in the 19th century, and it looked a lot different, too. **Vintage Base Ball Association clubs** across our area re-create base ball games from the 1850s to 1880s by donning traditional uniforms (no mitts, though—most field bare-handed!) and playing by the game's original rules. Clubs in our area include:

Atlantic Base Ball Club: Atlantic Park at Smithtown Historical Society, Smithtown (brooklynatlantics.org)
Gotham Base Ball Club of New York: Governors Island, NY Parade Grounds (gothambbc.com)
Mutual Base Ball Club of New York: Old Bethpage Village Restoration, Old Bethpage (nymutuals.com)
Newtown Sandy Hook Vintage Base Ball Club: McLaughlin Vineyards, Sandy Hook, CT

82 Watch a pro sport that originated with the Native Americans.

The **New York Lizards** (formerly the Long Island Lizards), Major League Lacrosse's only NY-area team, plays its home games at James M. Shuart Stadium at 900 Fulton Ave. in Hempstead. The MLL's regular season runs through early August, and the Lizards have games scheduled on select Fridays and Saturdays throughout the summer. The Lizards are celebrating Girls Lacrosse Day during their June 28 home game against the Ohio Machine, honoring the women who have impacted the sport's growth. Game tickets start at \$7.50. Family Fun Packs are available for \$98 (includes four "silver seating" tickets and four food vouchers); call 855-695-4927 to reserve. For more information, visit nylizards.com.

83 Take in a horse show.

Got a horse lover on your hands? While a 1,000-pound pet may be out of the question, you can take your equine enthusiast to a local horse show to watch these impressive animals and their human riders compete. Old Salem Farm in North Salem, where many Olympic equestrian stars have ridden, hosts 25 horse shows each year, including several in the summer leading up to mid-September's American Gold Cup, one of the most prestigious and iconic equestrian sporting events in the world of international show jumping.

Admission is free to these events, and the shows often feature shopping, family-friendly activities, and celebrity sightings. For more information on horse farms in the NY metro area, visit nymetroparents.com/horseback.

84 Go miniature golfing.

Find a course near you at nymetroparents.com/minigolf.

85 Hit a golf course.

A big-boy golf course, that is. Hey, Tiger Woods started when he was just 2!

86 Cheer on Jeter in his final season as a Bronx Bomber.

Individual tickets for **New York Yankees** games start at \$5. All fans 14 and younger, when accompanied by an adult, are eligible for half-price tickets in designated seating locations for Saturday games. Tickets may be purchased only on the day of the game at Yankee Stadium ticket windows, adjacent to Gate 4. Yankee Stadium is located at 1 E. 161st St. in the Bronx. For more information, visit newyork.yankees.mlb.com.

87 See who can do the most jumping jacks.

Yup, you, too.

88 Catch World Cup fever.

The 2014 FIFA World Cup (fifa.com/worldcup) kicks off June 12 and runs through July 13; we doubt you'll be able to make a trip to Brazil to watch it live (many area sports bars and restaurants do get particularly family-friendly during this world soccer frenzy, though, so ask around for the best places to be spectators). Take your little soccer lovers to watch the **New York Red Bulls** in a home match at Red Bull Arena in Harrison, NJ. The Bulls are the only major league soccer team in the New York metro area. The MLS regular season runs through Oct. 26. Game tickets start at \$25. Red Bull Arena is located at 600 Cape May St., Harrison, NJ. For more information, visit newyorkredbulls.com.

89 Get acquainted with Mr. Met.

Mets' Sunday home games are Family Sundays at Citi Field, when all kids receive a special item (such as a Father's Day gift for dads and kids on June 15), meet Mr. Met, and get a chance to run the bases after the game. Mets Family Pack tickets start as low as \$24, and each ticket comes with your choice of an entrée, a side of French fries, and a 16-ounce fountain drink. Individual tickets start at \$10. Citi Field is located at 123-01 Roosevelt Ave. in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens. For more information, visit newyork.mets.mlb.com.

90 Walk for good.

Challenge yourself at a charity run or walk while raising funds and awareness for a good cause. Find one near you at nymetroparents.com/walks.

91 Have a rock-throwing contest.

Go for distance—and lest we be overstating the obvious, don't throw rocks where someone could get hit.

92 Buy some peanuts and Cracker Jacks.

Minor league baseball may not have the die-hard fan base that the MLB does, but these games are a great alternative to the majors as they're often less expensive, include a wealth of kid-friendly extras, and give you the chance to scout and even meet up-and-coming MLB players. New York-area teams include the Coney Island Cyclones in Brooklyn, Staten Island Yankees, Long Island Ducks, Bridgeport Bluefish in Connecticut, and the Rockland Boulders. Find details on each team's schedule and family-friendly offerings at nymetroparents.com/bball.

Rainy Day Competition: Hit the lanes!

When it's wet outside or you've all just had too much sun for one day, bowling is a great indoor sport for the family. Find an alley in your area at nymetroparents.com/bowlingfun. Bonus: Kids can bowl free (up to two games per day) all summer long! Check out kidsbowlfree.com for details.

88

All Tuckered Out

With a little elbow grease and a lot of creativity, we guarantee these options will run your kids ragged.

Good night, folks (and we mean that literally!).



Go rollerblading. 93

Inline skating, so popular when we were young(er), is still a great source of physical activity, and the leading brand of inline skates that became synonymous with the sport, Rollerblade, now makes equipment that grows with your child. Besides donning a helmet and proper pads, first-time skaters must be patient while learning the basics, start with a smooth surface, and understand that it's okay to fall (they will!). For expert tips on teaching the youngest skaters to stay upright and a video demonstrating the "heel stop" braking method, visit nymetroparents.com/rollerblade.



We recommend strapping on a pair of the Rollerblade Spitfire XT (available in sizes 11J -1 with three wheels, 2-5 and 5-8 with four wheels; \$79.99; dickssportinggoods.com), which are designed with a lower center of gravity for balance and control—and expand four sizes!

94 Overcome obstacles.

Have the kids assemble their own obstacle course in the backyard or a small area of your local park. They'll expend energy plotting what to use and setting up the course. Then, when you invite friends over to test their skills, your young architects will be motivated to prove their prowess and conquer the course they built—then beat their own records.

95 Play flashlight tag.

96 Crown the kings and queens of the castle.

Forget a treehouse (that becomes a job for Dad and Mom). Challenge the children to construct a castle out of boxes from the recycling pile and found objects. Rainy day? Gather all the blankets and pillows you can find, and turn your brood loose on building their fort inside. Putting a cushion castle together will eat up a good chunk of time, and leave them just worn out enough to retreat to their masterpiece hideaway for a while.

97 Dance the day away.

Pump up the jams and ask your kids to make up their own dance. They'll flex their physical and creative muscles coming up with fun (possibly wacky) dance moves. See if they can mimic some of your moves...then see if you can learn theirs.

98 Set up your own color wars.

Invite neighborhood kids, camp friends, or school mates; assign teams; and let the games begin. Just make sure to make the races long and provide plenty of snack fuel to keep them going straight through to lights-out.



99

Cycle around town.

Pedal hard with a family bike ride around your neighborhood or a local track. Teach your kids about bike safety before your outing at nymetroparents.com/bike.

100 Hit the (play)ground running.

Monkey bars, slides, and swings, oh my! Run them ragged with not just any old day at the playground, but with an outing filled with mad dashes, races, and cartwheels on the grass. Make sure you have a stroller so you don't end up carrying your tired fellows home.

101 Have a Hoola-Hoop marathon.

102 Take a hike.

Explore some of the best—and most family-friendly—hiking spots around at nymetroparents.com/hike.

103 Dive right in.

Swimming is a crucial life skill that also helps to build strength. A dip in the pool and a game of Marco Polo are great, but to wear the kids out you'll need goggles and an abundance of energy—think relay races, dropping plastic fish on the bottom for them to retrieve, and water dancing. Need swimming lessons first? We've got you covered at nymetroparents.com/swimclasses.

104 Have a limbo contest.

Crank up the tunes, grab a long stick, and find out how low the kids can go! Find a full game plan, rules, and some fun modifications at nymetroparents.com/limbo.

In the Stars

Look up! Where and how to see the sky, kids

105 Count the stars.

Does someone in Iceland, England, or Russia see the same number of stars you see? Join NASA's **Star Count** program, count the number of stars you see on a clear night, and send your data to NASA to share and compare with other curious kids from all over the world.

Find more information, including how to prepare, at nymetroparents.com/star-count.

106 Travel with other astronomy buffs.

Though it's a few hours away, the **Rockland Astronomy Club's Summer Star Party** is sure to satisfy any stargazers' appetite with all of the celestial activities in store: With upgraded campground amenities, a large open grass telescope field with 360-degree view of the night sky (horizon to horizon!), special children's activities with "astro prizes," a brand new playground, and so much more, the northwest Massachusetts trip makes for a great family getaway. Peppermint Park Camping Resort, Plainfield, MA. 845-446-4336. rocklandastronomy.com. July 25-Aug. 3. Price varies by package purchased.

107 Sleep under the stars.

108 Call the moon by its Algonquin name.

The Algonquin tribes, who lived in regions from New England to Lake Superior, named the full moons each month to help track the seasons. The full moon in June is called the Full Strawberry Moon because it's when tribes would gather ripening strawberries. Find the other 11 full moon names at alamanac.com/content/full-moon-names.

109 Watch a meteor shower.

Let your kids stay up way past their bedtime (meteor showers aren't usually visible until after 12am, so summer is the perfect time) to watch the most popular meteor shower, the Perseids, which can be seen from the northern hemisphere and peak on warm August nights. Active from July 12 to Aug. 26, the Perseids—whose parent body is the Swift-Tuttle comet, meaning the meteoroids are released from the comet—are estimated to peak Aug. 11-12, according to the American Meteor Society.

110 See an outdoor movie.

Pack up the popcorn and a blanket and watch a movie in the park. Not on your tablet, silly! On a genuine big screen. From big name Disney musicals (*Frozen*) to super-powered smash hits (*Iron Man 3*), cult classics (*Back to the Future*) to animated blockbusters (*The Lego Movie*), you can catch free outdoor screenings of family flicks under the stars all summer long. Visit nymetroparents.com/outdoor-movies for details on screenings near you.

ENJOY THE NIGHT SKY...INSIDE.

Sometimes stars aren't at peak visibility—whether it's due to a summer storm or the bright city lights—but you can still enjoy celestial wonders at local planetariums. Find a location to gaze at the night sky (even during the middle of the day!) at nymetroparents.com/planetariums.



Lori Epstein / ©2014 National Geographic

111 Make a telescope.

You don't need a NASA-quality telescope to get a close look at stars. Build this one from *National Geographic Kids Get Outside Guide* using paper towel tubes. See if you can name some of the constellations that you may spot!

Supply list

- 2 paper towel tubes
- Scissors
- Masking tape
- Paint (any color you like)
- Paintbrushes
- 2 convex lenses (you can get these from a pair of magnifying glasses or by ordering lenses online)

Steps

1. Paint your paper towel tubes and let them dry.
2. Create the inner tube of the telescope. Using scissors, cut one tube lengthwise only on one side. Curl one side of the cut edge slightly over the other. Then tape the cut edge down.
3. Insert your inner tube into the second paper towel tube. It should fit snugly into the second tube but still be able to slide in and out. If not, adjust the size of the inner tube.
4. Tape one convex lens to the outer end of each tube, only around the rim, so you don't cover too much of the lens.
5. Hold your telescope with the inner tube facing your eye. Aim it at an object in the night sky. (Never use your telescope to look at the sun!) You can focus by sliding the inner tube in and out.

Find visual cues to help you with this step-by-step at nymetroparents.com/diy-telescope.

Excerpted from "National Geographic Kids Get Outside Guide."

112 Eat like an astronaut.

Freeze-drying food is a process that removes its water—reducing the food's weight up to 90 percent, making it smaller and easier to preserve.



Today, Astronaut Foods, founded in the 1970s to supply the astronauts of NASA's Apollo Missions, produces a variety of novelty treats including Neapolitan AstroRox Ice Cream Drops. As you gaze at the stars while enjoying this treat, imagine you're in a Space Shuttle. No freezers needed! (\$3.50; astronautfoods.com)

113 Find Polaris (the North Star).

Finding the Big Dipper, an asterism—a small grouping of stars—in the constellation Ursa Major (Great Bear) that looks like a bowl with a handle, is one of the easiest ways to find Polaris. Once you find the seven-star asterism, draw an imaginary line connecting the two stars on the edge of the bowl (without the handle) from bottom to top and continue it until you reach a really bright star—Polaris!

114 Romp around under the full moon.

According to common folklore, werewolves only turn into wolves when the moon is full. Play on this story and let your children and their friends run wild during the full moons this summer (June 13, July 12, and Aug. 10) by playing a game of "Where-wolf"—a spin on Sardines, where one person hides and everyone else (the werewolves) looks for the hider. The twist from regular hide-and-seek: Once someone finds the hider, they hide too. The last person to find the group of hiders has to then hide first.

115 Go gazing close to home.

There are myriad opportunities to go stargazing in our area—and yes, there are even places within NYC to see the stars at night! Many astronomy societies and observatories have free public viewing days where their equipment can be used and their expertise tapped (along, perhaps, with a bottle of wine). Go to nymetroparents.com/stargazing.

Pot Luck

After the novelty of *no more school!* has worn off, and between camp sessions, there will be days when you wake up and wonder what the heck to do. Presenting a few more unexpected ideas to keep boredom at bay

116 Have a percussion parade.

Around the yard or around the block, a single-file parade of little drummers will make quite a scene—and it'll be all-the-more appealing if the kids make their own drums first (project time!).

A big cookie tin may have initially said "yummy" to you, but it will say "noisy" in its second life. This project requires very few skills to make, but will receive a cheerful standing ovation—or better yet, a well-deserved drum roll. For a full how-to and template for making this toy drum, courtesy of *Petit Collage: 25 Easy Craft and Décor Projects for a Playful Home* (\$24.99; Potter Craft) by Lorena Siminovich, go to nymetroparents.com/drum.

117 Conduct a goofy family photo shoot.

Designate the day photo-worthy no matter what you do, and set up your own family photo session. Gathering and making props is half the fun—think cut-out mustaches, hats and sunglasses culled from every closet, Dad's neckties for Mom, Mom's handbags for baby, big sis's hair bows for Fido...you get the idea. Taking pictures outdoors in natural light is most flattering, so you've got one more reason to hang out in the sun. At the end of the day make sure to enter the kids in our **NYMetroParents 2014 Cover Contest** for a chance to win the Sony Cyber-Shot DSC-RX 100 digital camera (ARV \$550), courtesy of **B&H Photo Video**. Get all the details and enter by June 11 at nymetroparents.com/cover.

118 Lend some hands.

Volunteer as a group to help an elderly neighbor or a local organization or park clean up their grounds—it's a rewarding way to spend time together outdoors. If you don't have time for such a full-fledged project, pick some flowers during a morning hike and hang them as a surprise on a neighbor's door. Find more ways to give back with your kids at nymetroparents.com/volunteer.

119



119 Make your own natural watercolors, says Mickey...

The easiest way to make rich, natural watercolors is by boiling the plant with water to release its natural dyes. There are many common plants that can be used to create all-natural watercolor paints.

Red onion peels: crimson red and burgundy

Pokeberries: deep red

Orange pekoe tea: brown

Black walnuts: black

Queen Anne's Lace: green

Marigolds: yellow

Goldenrod: lime green

Blueberries: blue

Cayenne pepper: rust red

Yellow onion peels: various hues of yellow and tan

Coffee beans: browns and tans

Dandelions: mossy greens

Tip: Try using leaves, sticks, grass, and pinecones as paintbrushes.

Excerpted with permission from "Go Green! A Family Guide to a Sustainable Lifestyle" from Disney's Mickey & Friends Collection (\$12.99; EDDA USA)

120 ...now set up an outdoor easel, and create!

116



117



121 Keep tots cool and occupied.

Younger kids will love ice excavating: Simply freeze plastic toys in a large bowl and let them chip away at the ice.

122



Have an '80s flashback, and bring the kids along.

Cue up the '80s music and rummage through your old photo albums (remember those?) to get in touch with your inner roller-skating self, because there's a fabulous new rink in town—and while it's not under the stars, exactly, it is in the fresh Prospect Park air. Head over to **Lefrak Center at Lakeside**, Brooklyn's all-new, covered, open-air skating facility. The 16,000-square-foot roller rink overlooks Prospect Park Lake and has plenty of open lounging areas (which are perfect for enjoying a frozen treat from the Bluestone Lakeside Café after a skating session). The rink offers beginners skating, roller hockey, and roller derby classes. During Friday night dance party skating you can show off some of those *Xanadu* dance moves for your kids (you've still got it, right?)—they'll love it. Open seven days a week, with affordable on-site skate rentals, this is a one-stop shop for summer fun on wheels. And if you're traveling from further out in the borough, pick a night when there's a free show at the bandshell (celebratebrooklyn.org) to maximize your family outing at the park! Call for more information on classes. Hours: Monday-Thursday 2-6pm; Friday 2-10pm; Saturday 10am-10pm; Sunday 10am-6:30pm. Admission: \$6 Monday-Friday; \$8 weekends and holidays. Lefrak Center at Lakeside, 171 East Drive, Prospect Park. 718-462-0010. lakesideprospectpark.com.

123 Extend the fun into the evening.

Don't let darkness chase you indoors! This ThermaCELL lantern (\$22.99; thermacell.com) lights up the night with three LED bulbs while keeping bugs at bay. The portable, butane-operated lantern wards off mosquitoes, black flies, no-see-ums, and other biting insects, creating a 15-square-foot comfort zone—with no unpleasant citronella scent.



124 Fake a crime scene, for scientific purposes.

You can test how well people remember details from a crime scene by creating your own scene and then comparing the eyewitness testimony from several viewers.

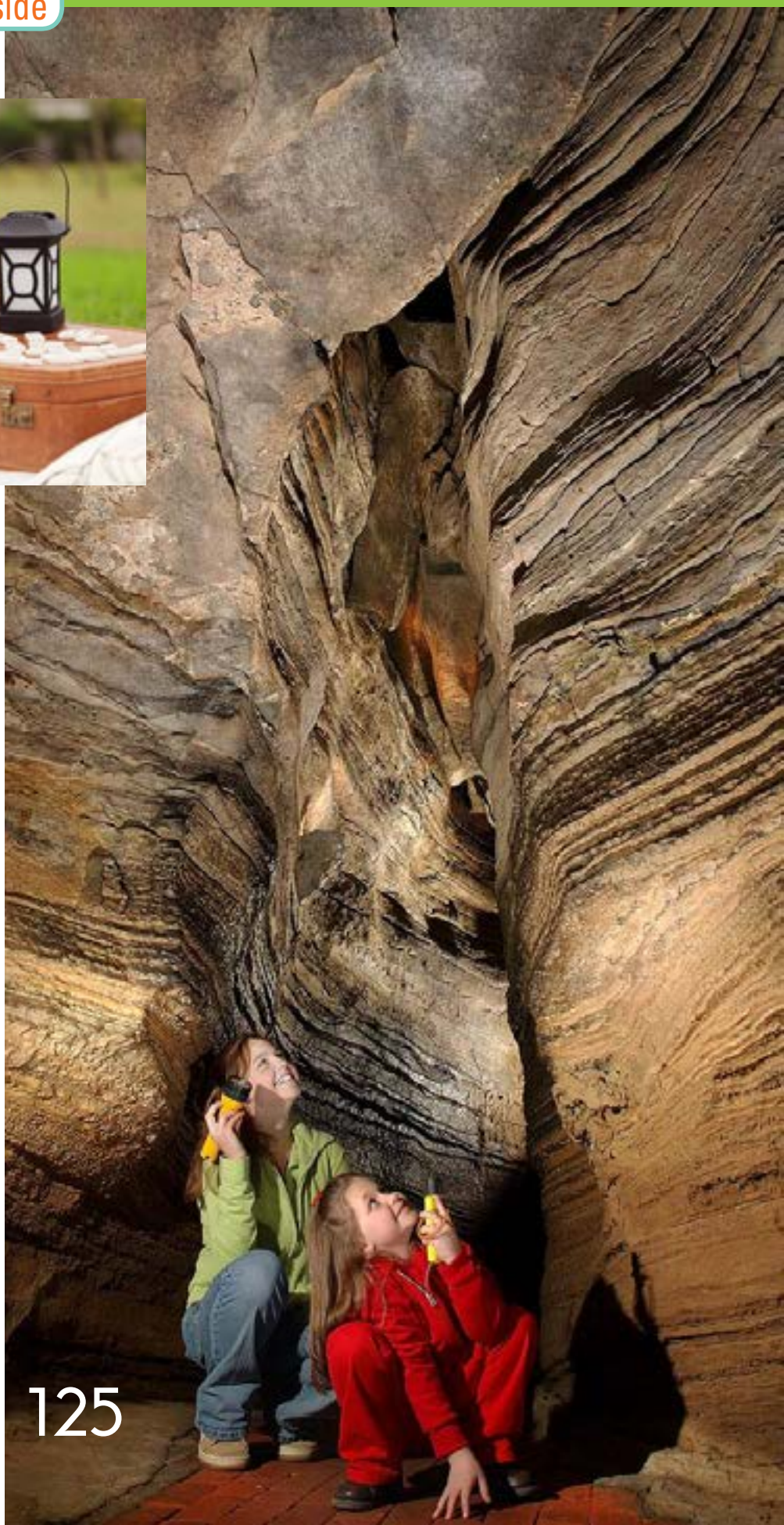
- Using a video camera and several friends, film a short video of a simple crime. For example, your friends could pretend to be walking down the street and a “thief” could come by and snatch a purse or other object from one of them.
- Create a written list of questions that a police investigator would ask an eye-witness to the crime. Ideas include: *Describe what you saw. Was the criminal male or female? What was the criminal wearing? Approximately how tall was the criminal? Give a general description of the criminal.*
- Assemble a group of volunteers to watch your video without knowing what they will see. After the volunteers watch the video, question each volunteer individually. Half of them should answer the questions immediately. Have the second group answer the questions several hours later.
- Compare the answers from each eyewitness. How many answered the questions correctly? Which questions were most likely to be answered correctly or incorrectly? How did the responses from each group differ?

To investigate more, create different versions of your video—use different lighting, have the criminal wear different clothing or appear on screen for shorter or longer periods, or film from a different distance or angle. How do these changes affect your eyewitness testimony? You may also change the amount of time between watching the video and answering the questions. How does this affect eyewitness testimony?

Excerpted from “Forensics: Uncover the Science and Technology of Crime Scene Investigation”; used by permission of Nomad Press, LLC. Copyright © 2013 by Nomad Press. All rights reserved.

Head upstate to go underground.

Take a day or weekend trip to Howe Caverns Adventure Park in Cobleskill (approximately a 3-hour drive from NYC), where you can journey more than 150 feet below the Earth's surface and tour an underground cavern 6 million years in the making. We recommend the **Family Flashlight Tour**, a 2-hour cavern tour with flashlights and headlamps offered on Sunday evenings (for ages 5 and older). \$35 per person. Reservations required; call 518-296-8900. Visit howecaverns.com for more details.



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