



SUMMER-FALL-WINTER-SPRING FAMILY PLAY PLANS

Busy families often find it hard to set aside time for play, especially with the distraction of screens and technology.

TRUCE offers some seasonal, screen-free ideas to inspire your whole family — whatever their ages—to play together.



SUMMER PLAY PLAN

Turn off the Screen & Turn on the WATER

Water offers endless opportunities for family playtime—both indoors and out.

Water is a simple, everyday item, which can be turned into hours of creative family play. As families play together, children learn skills such as cooperation, turn taking, problem-solving, and much more. And, of course, playing together is just plain fun for everyone.



You can add to the value of the play by talking about what you are doing: “I’m using the hose to fill my bucket with water.” “My bucket is heavier when it’s filled with water than when it’s empty.” Ask simple questions, such as: “I wonder how many buckets it will take to fill up this wading pool?” “How did you manage to pour it without spilling any?”

Watch young children as they play. Often this can help you figure out what they’re working on, so you know what to say and do.

PLAY VALUE—PRICE VALUE

Playing with water—an inexpensive, open-ended material—can offer a deeper, more creative play experience



than many of the expensive, one-purpose toys sold today.

IDEAS FOR SUMMERTIME FAMILY PLAY WITH WATER



PROJECTS WITH WATER

- **Water Fun.** On a hot day, use a water sprinkler, hoses, children's pool, fire hydrant, or a public water spray display. Let kids and adults enjoy its coolness to their heart's content. Make up relay races and other games where players must run through the water.
- **Car or Toy Wash.** Fill a few bins and buckets with water—some soapy for washing, some clear for rinsing. Provide sponges for scrubbing. Then bring out toy cars for a carwash or carefully choose safe toys to wash. Wash the family car together.
- **Rainy Day.** Let the family play outside on warm rainy days (not during a thunderstorm!), wearing raincoats or even bathing suits. Bare feet can add to the fun.
- **Measure, Pour, Sprinkle.** Fill bins, buckets, or a children's pool with water. Add some common kitchen utensils—measuring cups, basters, funnels, bowls, egg beaters. For variety, add food coloring and scent to match (green food coloring with peppermint scent; yellow with lemon scent, etc.).



GAMES WITH WATER

- **Dribble, Dribble, Drench.** This is a water-based version of Duck, Duck, Goose to be played on a hot day, when kids are wearing bathing suits. Players sit in a circle. "It" walks around the circle with a plastic pitcher or watering can, dribbling a few drops on each person's head, until he dumps it all out on one player. That player chases "it" around the circle, trying to tag him before he sits in the empty spot.

- **Water Balloon Catch.** Fill balloons with some water. For young children, play catch. Older siblings and adults can play catch, taking a step back each time the balloon is successfully caught. Predict how many times you can throw the balloon without breaking it. You can play with a wet sponge, too.



- **Water Transfer.** Fill one bucket with water; another is empty. Using a sponge or turkey-baster, see if you can transfer the water from one bucket to another (no pouring allowed!). Predict how many times you'll need to fill the sponge or baster in order to fill the bucket.

WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY?

Water is one of the basic raw materials for purposeful play. Just like sand, clay, and blocks, children can use water without being constrained by the one, right way to use it. Unlike many of the commercially produced, flashy playthings tempting us between Saturday-morning cartoons, water is a plaything that fosters curiosity, imagination, and experimentation--and it is free.

—Sarah Crosser, Ph.D

WATER AND ART

- **Painting with Water.** On a warm day, give children a bucket of water and a large paintbrush or paint roller. Let them "paint" the side of the house, driveway, sidewalk, garage, or any other surface. The water darkens the surface and looks painted. As it dries, they can "paint" again. The whole family can "paint" together on the wall.
- **Ice Cube Painting.** Make ice cubes out of different colored water. Children can add the color with eye droppers. Freeze. Once the cubes are frozen, the whole family can paint with them on white fingerprint paper.



TRUCE FAMILY PLAY TIP

Develop a family screen turn off ritual. Here are some ideas:

- Count all the screens that are on as you turn them off.
- See if you can turn off all the screens in a minute or less.
- Have a bin or basket where you put all portable screens during family play time.

