

Family Outings and Traditions

Spring, summer, autumn and winter days offer wonderful opportunities for families to participate in a variety of activities. We urge you to take time out to enjoy and celebrate your children in ways that will create special memories for both you and your children. The following activities are meant to spark your own creative ideas. All are free or inexpensive and most require a minimum of advanced planning.

- ♥ **“Can’t Decide What to Do” Outing:** When the family wants to do something together but can’t decide what, have everyone write or draw a picture of an activity on small pieces of paper. Put all suggestions in a “hat” and draw one. Ground rules would include “Whatever is drawn out of the hat – we do.”
- ♥ **Progressive Meal:** If the family is going out to eat, have everyone write a choice of where to go for the appetizer, the main course, and dessert on separate pieces of paper. Put the choices in envelopes marked “Appetizer”, “Main Course”, “Dessert”. Before leaving the house, draw from the appetizer envelope to determine where the evening will begin. After you have eaten the appetizer, draw from the “Main Course” envelope and so on.
- ♥ **Last Things First:** Eat dessert first while everyone still has room for it.
- ♥ **Cloud Watch:** Lie on your back with your child and watch the clouds for shapes. Make up stories about the shapes.
- ♥ **State Parks:** Missouri has several beautiful state parks. Set a family goal to visit all the state parks and then pick one to visit first. For information about Missouri’s parks, contact the Department of Natural Resources, 205 Jefferson Street, Jefferson City, MO 65101; 800-334-6946.
- ♥ **Penny Walk:** Take a family walk and flip a coin to determine the direction you will go at each crossroads – heads = right, tails = left. Use dice or count everyone’s pennies to determine how far to go in each direction.
- ♥ **Paper Boats:** Make paper boats together and take them to a pond or stream to see which will stay afloat the longest.
- ♥ **Rainy Day Fun:** Do something your mother may have told you not to do – play in the rain. Get soaking wet and then squish your toes in the mud together.
- ♥ **Grow-a-Salad:** Plant a “box” garden together. Start by looking for your desired container at garage sales, dump in a big bag or two of potting soil, plant lettuce and carrot seeds, nurture with water and soon you’ll see the sprouts...lettuce first, then carrots.
- ♥ **Sidewalk Art:** Get a big bucket of sidewalk chalk (available at just about any store that sells toys) and make a mural together. Be sure to take a picture of it for the family scrapbook.
- ♥ **Photo Contest:** Invest in a couple of inexpensive cameras and several rolls of film. Choose a subject – flowers, children, rocks, clouds, sunsets – and go on a photo shoot together to photograph the subject. After the film is developed, set up a display of the photos and invite a panel of friends to judge them. This could develop into a long-term family hobby.
- ♥ **It’s Your Time, _____:** Plan time (even if it is just an hour or two) to spend with each child individually – a time that is his or hers alone with you. It is a time to do anything he or she chooses to do with you – walk and talk, go fishing, play a game – an uninterrupted time. The value of the time will be increased if it does not center on the buying of “things”.

- ♥ **Switcheroo Day:** Switch roles with your children for a day or part of a day – they are responsible for taking care of you and you are responsible for performing their chores and following their directions. Establishing ground rules ahead of time will help avoid conflicts.
- ♥ **Rubbings:** Go for a walk. Take paper and crayons/pencils along and make rubbings of interesting things like sidewalk markings, tree bark, leaves, etc.
- ♥ **Memory Scan:** What did you dream of doing with your parent(s) when you were a child? Ask your children what they dream of doing with you. Then do it. Help your child develop a list of questions they would like to ask their grandparents or older adult about their childhood. Tape the interview as a keepsake.
- ♥ **Nature Collage:** Go for a walk to search for objects of nature. Take them home and glue them in a design on cardboard to make a collage – you may create art worth framing.
- ♥ **The State Capital:** Missouri’s capital city has a variety of interesting places to visit – the Capitol is just one. The Runge Nature Center (Department of Conservation) and Jefferson Landing (Department of Natural Resources) offers opportunities to learn about our state. *(For information about these and other affordable Missouri outings, contact the Division of Tourism, Truman Building, Room 290, Box 1055, Jefferson City, MO 65102-1055; 573-751-4133).*
- ♥ **Capture the Memories:** Be sure to plan ways to save the memories of your adventures. Take lots of photographs and keep journals of the fun, funny and near disastrous aspects of each outing. On a rainy day, work together to create a family scrapbook.

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These ideas are just starters...we know you will generate others. Most importantly, no matter what you choose to do – take time to cherish the wonder of your children – they will never be this age again.



Provided for you by the:

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