

Plan a smarter summer for your children
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Summer is here and every organization in town is offering summer programs for youth. If you plan just right, you can keep your child busy all day, every day until school begins again in August!

While keeping children involved in activities during the summer months can be a positive thing, it can be negative if summer plans are non-productive. Plus, all of this “running” can be very stressful for children.

Many times, adults push their children into activities because of our desire to have them involved, or to keep them active. Summertime can be an opportunity to learn, to acquire new skills, and to develop talents and interests - but too much can cause undue anxiety to both children and families. The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension offers the following advice for parents to help in choosing constructive summer activities:

When signing up for summer activities, ask your children a few questions: What do you wish you had more time to do? Why do you want to be involved in this activity? Are you willing to give something else up in order to participate? After this discussion, review your child’s answers and let that be your guide in making future plans.

Provide experiences that are developmentally and age appropriate for your child. Signing up for an advanced art class may sound like a lot of fun to you but can stifle creativity and increase anxiety in children that are not ready for such a structured activity.

If you are considering a sleep-away camp, there are several things you can do to prepare your child for spending time away from home.

Practice shorter separation periods prior to camp, so your child becomes familiar with which coping mechanisms work best for him or her.

Attend any camp orientations or meetings with your child, if possible. Allow them to voice their concerns and answer all the questions you can about camp and its activities. Focus on the fun things that your child will enjoy while they are away, like swimming and sports.

Pack pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelopes for your child to mail to you or other family members while they are away.

Finally, when making your family plans for the summer make sure to also plan for some “down time.” It is very important to strike a balance between work and play.

For more information about the 4-H program or other youth development issues, contact the Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office at (706) 769-3946 or stop by our office located behind the Oconee County Courthouse.