

## **School's out: What makes a perfect summer for teen-agers?**

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Remember those lazy days of your childhood summers? After that initial thrill of being let out of school wore off, did you whine, "I'm bored!?" Now kids say they never get a chance to be bored.

Both parents usually have to work to make ends meet. And even when a parent is home with their kids during the summer, the kids often end up over-scheduled.

Most of us don't want our kids set loose without an anchor, to wander the streets on bikes and skateboards, roam the malls and hang out for endless, unsupervised hours on the beach. So we sign them up for camps and classes. But many kids feel so stressed from heavy loads of academics and sports during the school year that they're dying for a break.

They long for an idealized summer, filled with only activities they really enjoy. For some, that's lazy, unscheduled time. For others, it's the thrill of adventurous, athletic and homework-free activities.

Here's what some kids and teens around the county have to say about what works for them in the summer:

Eva, who is 11, says, "I just like lazing around at home and not worrying about anything. I do a few camps for a week at a time.

"I like sleep-over camp because I get to be with all my friends on my own. And basketball camp is a way to keep in shape and not just be a couch potato."

Laurel, 12, takes morning classes in art, writing or swimming for two-week sessions.

"But not more than that," she says. "I do need my free time because I don't want my summer to be run like school.

"But I also need something to focus on because when there's not one thing planned for too long and all there is to do is read or watch TV, I start to feel blaaah — which equals really bored!"

Sara, 12, wants to focus on horseback riding during the summer.

"Since I don't have to do homework, I can ride more," she says. "I love it because I'm controlling a huge, powerful animal and that's amazing. There's a bond between me and my horse that's like nothing else in the world."

Naomi, 12, says she "really likes hanging out with friends and family. And fun camps, like riding camp or temple camp, make the time fly by because you're with your friends."

When she takes family vacations, she likes them to be "relaxing, not totally booked with museums and walking around.

"When I went to Italy, I must have gone to every museum in Rome. It was exhausting!"

Teen summers Many teen-agers like to integrate goal-oriented activities and work into their summers.

Rachel, 16, does Junior Guards, works as a lifeguard at Simpkins and plays water polo.

"I do so much because all of it is fun," she says. "You're with your friends, and there's no homework!"

"In Junior Guards, you're at the beach and with your friends. Getting exercise and being in nature de-stresses you. The instructors have a really positive attitude."

Erik, 17, spends summer working as a state lifeguard on the beach. Though it's a long day, it's good money.

"I work from 10 to 5," he says, "so I can still surf before and after work if there's a swell. And when I have a couple of days off, I really appreciate them."

"My typical day consists of sitting in the tower, talking to the public about water safety if I see a need, and possibly making a rescue. I made five last summer."

Erik was in Junior Guards from age 8 to 12. "I remember when I wasn't doing guards, it felt like there was too much free time," he recalls.

Andrew, 16, describes his ideal summer as "surfing as much as possible and taking time to hang with friends and family."

"And, I think it's really important to spend time with yourself, to get to know your true nature. There's not much time to do that during the school year."

He also likes to work part-time in the summer. "I like building and creating things because you're sending a piece of yourself into the world," he says.

"And when someone appreciates your work, they're appreciating you. I like to work, because when all I do is hang out and kick it with my friends, I start to feel static."

"I want my life to be dynamic — always moving forward."

Family vacations make memories.

Eva always takes summer camping trips with her parents, which she loves because "you get away from the craziness of your normal life and get to relax a little."

"My Dad and I always take out our canoe. We paddle, talk and fish. One time at sunset, we heard this fluttering sound, and at least 200 bats were flying above our heads into the setting sun. It was so cool."

Possibilities for special parent-child memories lie in wait in those summer days and evenings.

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