Summer Activities for Teens

As your child moves through the teen years, the challenges for you as a parent will change.

The need for full-time child care will gradually diminish, although younger teens will still require some supervision. However, you will still face the challenge of keeping your teen active and occupied during the summer months, and will want to find opportunities for new experiences and learning.

Resistance to Planning

You may be met with some resistance to plans for organized activities, and hear pleas from your teen to just "hang out." Try to negotiate a compromise—agree to a few days of relaxing at home at the beginning and the end of the summer, and perhaps a few days off in the middle between activities.

Make sure negotiations include your child's agreement to keep you informed of their whereabouts at all times, and to provide you with relevant telephone numbers.

This may be a good time to remind your teen that future universities, colleges and employers will review previous summer activities as part of their application process, and just "hanging out" isn't going to impress anyone.

Fortunately, there is a wide range of activities to interest most teens.

Day Camps or Residential Camps

Younger teens still enjoy camp and there is a wide variety to suit different interests. For a full description of the different types of camps available, consult your local parks and recreation guide. Also consider speaking with the parents of your teen's friends to see which camps they recommend.

If your teen thinks that he or she is too old to be attending camp, consider the following employment and volunteer opportunities than many camps offer teens:

- **CIT (Counsellor in Training).** These positions are unpaid and may require you to pay a fee. They offer teens excellent experience and skills for future paid camp jobs.
- **Camp counsellors.** These positions are paid and can be a great way for older teens to gain a sense of responsibility, learn new skills, make new friends and earn money in the process.

Special Interest Workshops

Many organizations offer summer workshops in a variety of areas. These may be affiliated with local museums, theatres or centres for the arts. They usually run from one to four weeks.

Study Opportunities

Your teen may want or need to use the summer months to catch up in areas of study or to advance in new subjects.

Both high schools and private schools may provide catch-up or advancement courses in your community. Your teen's guidance counsellor will be able to make suggestions.

Privately operated learning centres may offer intensive tutoring. Again, this may include both catch-up and advancement opportunities.

Work Opportunities

Summer work can help your teen gain a valuable sense of responsibility and learn new skills. It can be an important part of the application process for future universities, colleges or employment.

Many jobs are only available in the summer and can offer opportunities to students. These may include:

- Lifeguard work
- Work with parks, recreation centres and golf clubs
- Jobs with landscaping and house maintenance companies
- Work with amusement parks and other tourist-related centres
- Hotel or restaurant work
- Summer tutoring

Self-Designed Jobs

Self employment can be a good option for teens of all ages, offering flexible hours with summer income. Opportunities may include neighbourhood odd jobs, housecleaning, gardening, babysitting, pet care, tutoring or assistance with home maintenance.

Students living in rural areas may find this a particularly practical option and can frequently add local farmers to their list of potential self-employment clients.

Volunteer Work

Today, an increasing number of students are looking to summer volunteer work as an excellent way to meet other people, learn new skills, and gain valuable work experience for their résumés and future college or career plans.

Volunteer options are broad and may include:

- Helping at hospitals or homes for the aged and people with special needs
- Working on community projects
- Working with museums, libraries or art centres
- Working with charitable organizations
- Working as an intern—an unpaid position with a private business or not-for-profit organization

As a parent, you'll want to ensure that your teen has a fun, yet productive summer. Consider reviewing the above options with him or her to determine which option best suits his or her interests and goals. For additional information and opportunities, consult with your teen's school guidance counsellor or your municipality's parks and recreation department.