



## Know! Teens Can Be Apart, But Together For Summer Fun

Summer fun for youth typically includes packed pools, backyard camping, fairs and festivals, sporting events, and lazy days spent simply hanging out—with their friends. This summer is unfortunately going to look and feel different for them and for us. Depending on where you live and the personal choices you're making for your family, you and your children may fully be experiencing a shelter-in-place lifestyle, or you may be starting to reengage in slightly closer social interactions.

There is still a great deal of uncertainty, and differing opinions on how best to move forward, taking into account the physical and mental health wellness of ourselves, our children, and extended family members. There is no question however that our tweens and teens want and need social interaction, whether that means virtual hangouts with family and friends or getting together while staying six feet apart.

### Socially Distant Summer Fun

Tasked with coming up with summer activities young people can do apart, but together, we went straight to the experts – parents and youth. Here are some of the fantastic ideas they came up with:

- Take a hike, bike ride, or walk together—just maintain distance
- Play cornhole, frisbee golf, or putt-putt with a friend
- Hammocking is a big trend among teens. They can still hang out and hammock in the same area together, just make sure it's one person to a hammock

- Grab a pole and go fishing with a friend
- Try canoeing, kayaking, or paddle boarding (always with another person)
- Set up an inexpensive kiddie pool in the backyard for each friend invited, and have guests bring over their own popsicle and lemonade
- Go skateboarding, go-karting, or paintballing
- Start a weekly running club
- B-Y-O-B – Bring Your Own Basketball and play H-O-R-S-E or 21—apart, but together
- Volunteer with a friend—do some yardwork or go shopping for an elderly neighbor
- Meet up with friends for a picnic at the park—just bring your own blanket and food
- Plant a backyard garden or build garden boxes, nurture, and watch your plants grow
- Try geocaching: follow GPS coordinates to find treasures near you
- Create a scavenger hunt and invite friends to join – check out Google for endless ideas
- Come up with Amazing Race-type challenges
- Invite surrounding backyard neighbors to a socially distant, outdoor movie night
- Firepit and smores with seats spaced out
- Go old school with traditional yard games like horseshoes, badminton, or croquet—just use separate mallets, racquets, and horseshoes
- Get creative by painting, pressing flowers, or sculpting with clay
- Find a good-old-fashioned pen pal
- Better yet, try creating an “Ongoing Story” with friends—get an inexpensive journal, write how much or little you want to get the story started, then leave it on a friend’s doorstep with instructions to keep it going (and on and on). Or, go virtual and tell the story in an online format like a shared Google doc.
- Have an online cupcake decorating contest—post photos and ask for votes
- Create fun TikTok videos
- While in-person escape rooms may be temporarily closed, virtual escape rooms like Hogwarts Digital Escape Room and Jumanji: Escape to Camp just might be calling your name

This summer is going to look and feel different for our children, but it need not be wasted. There are plenty of opportunities and a variety of ways for them to get outside, get active, have fun, soak up the summer sun and fresh air, and yes, even enjoy time spent with friends!

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