When You Can’t Visit the Pool

Swimming is synonymous with summer—but social distancing protocols may mean limited access to public or community pools this year. If your go-to swimming locale has closed its doors, consider these options.

* **Use a lawn sprinkler.**Provided you have yard space, go old-school, and haul out a lawn sprinkler for kids to run around in. You might even get the urge and run through it yourself.
* **Get a kiddie pool.**It may not be the height of luxury, but in a pinch, an inexpensive kiddie pool is better than nothing! Cool off in one of these refillable plastic shells.
* **Have a squirt gun fight.** Sometimes you don’t feel like taking the whole plunge into a pool, anyway. Spritz each other with squirt guns instead.
* **Go to a lake**. Pools may be off-limits, but many lakes are still open for public swimming. If there are lakes in your area, be sure check their current swimming restrictions before heading out.

When You Can’t Go on Vacation

A summer without vacation may sound like a major bummer, especially if travel is a family tradition. This year, with travel restrictions likely to be in place for months to come, try reframing your thinking about vacation with these alternatives.

* **Camp in the backyard**. Roast marshmallows, tell spooky stories, and spend the night under the stars—right in your own backyard.
* **Take a culinary "vacation."**Can’t travel the world? Bring the flavors of far-flung cuisines to your home kitchen. Once a week, try a new recipe from a place you’d like to visit someday, like [tuna poke bowls](https://www.verywellfit.com/hawaiian-tuna-poke-bowl-recipe-4144608) from Hawaii, [spiced swordfish](https://www.verywellfit.com/mediterranean-spiced-swordfish-with-tomato-olive-bruschetta-4173673) from the Mediterranean, or a [Chinese chicken wonton soup](https://www.verywellfit.com/basic-vegetable-and-chicken-wonton-soup-4152047).
* **Enjoy the great outdoors.**After months of quarantine, we could all probably use more fresh air. Have a picnic, take a hike, or go for a scenic drive.
* **Make it a**[**staycation**](https://www.verywellmind.com/have-a-truly-relaxing-staycation-3145216)**.**Your very own hometown (or one close by) can be a surprising source of interest and fun. Make a list of the popular attractions in your area you’ve never visited—or the ones you’ve visited and loved. See how many of them you can hit this summer. If budget allows, book a stay at a local hotel where you can leave daily stressors behind and simply relax.
* **Take advantage of virtual tours.** Famous sites and world-class museums all over the world have jumped on the virtual bandwagon during Covid-19. Destinations like the [battlefields at Gettysburg](https://www.battlefields.org/visit/virtual-tours/gettysburg-360-virtual-tour), [the Louvre](https://www.louvre.fr/en/visites-en-ligne), and [the Smithsonian](https://naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour) now have tours available online. Take an educational “trip” as a family to any of these bucket list attractions.

When You Can’t Have a Party

Pool parties, cocktail parties, and [birthday parties](https://www.verywellfamily.com/active-birthday-parties-for-kids-1257350) will likely need to be tweaked this year. Here are some ways to be festive *and* safe.

* **Take your party online.**A successful online party needs an activity. (Otherwise, it’s just awkward.) Recruit your friends for a gathering with a definite agenda, like trivia night or talent show, via a video chat platform.
* **Take your party outside.**The great outdoors certainly simplify [social distancing](https://www.verywellfamily.com/your-top-questions-about-social-distancing-answered-4800511). Meet with friends in a park for a potluck with plenty of space or sit six feet apart around a fire pit in the driveway.
* **Make it a family affair.**Had to cancel your annual summer luau or Fourth of July bash? Have a themed “party” with immediate family instead. Scrounge up some costumes and pair a themed menu to the occasion.
* **Have a parade.**A birthday boy or girl deserves to feel special! When a party isn’t possible, enlist friends and family to drive by in a celebratory parade.

When Summer Day Camp Is Cancelled

Oof…you had grand plans to put the kids in a [summer day camp](https://www.verywellfamily.com/summer-camp-guide-for-kids-parents-3128847) and now that’s not an option. On the bright side, perhaps this summer can be an opportunity to help kids learn real-world skills at home.

* **Have a daily workout.**Summer camp or no, kids need physical activity! Schedule a time each day for exercise, whether a bike ride, a walk, a dance party, or a kid friendly YouTube workout video.
* **Build mini empires.**Legos, K’nex, and plain old wooden blocks can all serve as a fun foundation for hours of play.
* **Bring on the board games.** Large-group games may be out of the question at the moment, but board games are still on the table (figuratively and literally). This classic family pastime has a hidden benefit: Board games can be good for kids’ [linguistic, cognitive, and social development](https://www.verywellfamily.com/best-educational-kids-games-for-school-age-children-620464).
* **Get kitchen-savvy.**If there’s one skill your child will always use, it’s cooking. Check out [our guide](https://www.verywellfamily.com/cooking-together-with-large-family-4777225) for creating age-appropriate roles for kids in the kitchen.
* **Try a science experiment.**Everyday household items like baking soda, vinegar, and food coloring are fair game for science experiments for kids of any age. Find your next project on websites like [Science Fun](http://www.sciencefun.org/) and [Science Bob](http://www.sciencebob.com/).
* **Schedule a virtual show and tell.**Young kids love to show off their favorite stuff—a fact quarantine won’t change. To let your child take pride in their special possessions, set up a time they can video chat with a friend for a virtual show and tell.
* **Dive into arts and crafts.**You don’t have to be a creative master to help your kids enjoy arts and [crafts](https://www.verywellfamily.com/best-at-home-craft-kits-for-kids-4801446). Search projects appropriate to your child’s age on YouTube or Pinterest.
* **Plan a scavenger hunt**. Who doesn’t enjoy a scavenger hunt? Create your own list of items for kids to find around the house, then set them loose to search for a pink sock, a measuring spoon, a jingle bell, or other simple objects.
* **Play dress-up**. An outfit of Mom’s high heels, Dad’s ties, and a silly hat? Why not? Playing dress-up is an age-old, cost-free go-to for little ones.
* **Crack open a good book.**To motivate kids to read, find out if your local library is offering a distanced summer reading program for kids. Or, if audiobooks are your child’s preference, tune in to [Librivox](http://www.librivox.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), which features thousands of classics in the public domain for free. [Audible](https://stories.audible.com/start-listen), too, is offering many kids’ titles for free as long as schools are closed.

When You Can’t Go to the Movies

Grab your popcorn and turn down the lights! While in-person theaters may not resume showing pictures on the big screen for a while yet, you can make the best of movie night with these alternative options.

* **Go to a drive-in.**In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of drive-in movie theaters around the country have been doing a booming business. Catch the mid-century vibe by checking one out.
* **Read, then watch.**Which was better, the book or the movie? Find out by reading a book as a family, then watching the movie.
* **Get a genre.**A special theme makes everything more fun. As a family, make a plan to watch all of a certain type of movie over the summer—perhaps all the Disney princess movies, all the Harry Potter movies, or favorite ‘60s musicals.
* **Have a virtual movie night.**Apps like [Netflix Party](http://www.netflixparty.com/)and [Metastream](https://getmetastream.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)offer a new way to watch movies with friends. By synching your video play and adding a group chat, you can watch “together” from a distance.

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/family-summer-activity-alternatives-during-covid-19-4846252>