



\*\* This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/parenting-summer-activities>

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### **Tips for Parents: Summer fun for young children**

K-State youth development agent shares ideas for activities with children

*By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service*

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Parents seeking fun activities for their school-aged children during summer break may not need to look any further than the kitchen cabinet.

Think cornstarch, water and liquid food coloring.

“A really easy activity that you can do with young children is make your own chalk paint,” said Tristen Cope, a family and youth development agent in K-State Research and Extension's Chisholm Trail District.

Equal parts cornstarch and water, a dab of food coloring, mix it all up in muffin tins or a small cup...easy as that, you've got summertime fun.

“It's a great activity to get outside and play and explore with your kids,” Cope said. “You can even do it on your driveway because (the paint) will wash off.”

Cope said a series of publications available online from the [K-State Research and Extension bookstore](#) contains a wealth of simple ideas for parents and kids to play this summer.

The series, titled [Suddenly in Charge](#), includes 11 titles, each with at-home activities that parents, older children or other caregivers can put together for younger children.

Some examples:

- **Create a 'calm jar.'** Fill a jar three-fourths with water, add clear glue (or corn syrup), and any number of random items – sequins, glitter, butters, food coloring and more. Tighten or tape down the lid and shake the bottle. Watch the items

shimmer. “That’s your sense of calming as you maybe think about your next activity or before you get up and go play,” Cope said.

- **Backyard camping.** Set up a tent, cook dinner, build a small campfire, plan smores, bring a flashlight, read a book. Cope says even if you don’t end up sleeping outside, adults and children share a memorable experience being outside.
- **Masking tape freeways.** Use the tap to create lines all around the house, perhaps up and down furniture, across the floor, through the kitchen. Then use whatever toys you have on hand to ride the freeways, or play Follow the Leader.
- **Build an indoor fort.** “I love the magic that happens when you put together your traditional fort,” Cope said. Some use furniture, chairs, part of a bed or table, then spread blankets over the top and lots of pillows inside. “You make it all cozy and comfy,” Cope said. “The opportunities are endless.”
- **Read a book.** Simple, right? But one of the most simple activities is also one of the most beneficial. “Reading with young children is one of the most foundational things you can do as a parent or caregiver,” Cope said. “I think when you have those experiences – whether it’s in a tent or under a tree or inside your pillow fort – you have created a magical moment and are really engaged with your child.”

Cope also encourages parents to include children in preparing and serving meals. Measuring ingredients helps to teach math skills, as well as learning an important life skill. Making cold snacks – such as popsicles, smoothies or frozen fresh fruit – is also a fun activity on hot days.

“I believe it’s so important that we have routines during the summertime,” Cope said. “Children thrive when they have a routine that is set. It doesn’t have to be as structured as what you would have during the school year...but having a routine when you get up in the morning and brushing your teeth and planning some order of events that will happen for that is very helpful in keeping a child on track.”

More activities are available by visiting <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu> and searching for ‘Suddenly in Charge.’ More information also is available at [local K-State Research and Extension offices in Kansas](#).

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**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this story

K-State Research and Extension bookstore, <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu>

Suddenly in Charge publication series,

<https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/search?q=Suddenly+in+Charge>

K-State Research and Extension local offices, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html>

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