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Excite your little scientist with summer activities

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Children who enjoy science develop strong analytical and problem-solving skills--skills that will serve them well throughout their lives. But how can parents help their children appreciate science and generate enthusiasm to discover the world around them?

Andy Allan, director of curriculum development at Champions Science Adventures summer camps (scienceadventures.com), recommends taking science education out of the classroom and making it a hands-on experience.

Allan offers these tips to parents to help ignite their child's interest in the world of science and discovery this summer:

- *Children like to collect "things." Encourage your child to build a collection of items they can find outdoors such as leaves, shells, bugs and rocks. Provide a place to display their findings and ask them questions about their collection.
- *Explore the great outdoors by taking a family nature hike to identify birds, plants and insects. Have your child keep a journal of findings discovered along the way. Add drawings when you get home.
- *Invite your kids into the kitchen to cook with you and have them follow recipes to help improve their math and science skills.
- *Take a trip to a local toy or hobby shop. There are numerous take-home science kits available on topics from dinosaurs to the human skeleton.
- *Take a trip to the local science museum for an afternoon of shared exploration.
- *Keep a weather journal.
- *Grow a plant. Plant a simple seed like a radish in a pot and have your child check it every day. Record results in a photo journal.
- *Find a dark open space and use binoculars to scan the night sky for constellations.
- *Make paper airplanes and see which design stays in the air the longest.