

Take a Mini-Camping Trip!

For the family that enjoys the outdoors, try this idea for fun bonding time: turn your backyard into a vacation hot spot! Parents and kids alike will love setting up a tent, telling stories, and eating camping food. Not only does this activity teach kids to plan ahead and be prepared, but it allows the whole family to enjoy a "staycation"—as you spend quality time together, at the low, low price of ... free!



What You Need:

- Pencil
- Paper
- Tent
- Flashlights
- Camp food: turkey dogs, hot dog buns, beans, veggies and dip, lemonade, and water
- Cooler
- Sleeping bags and pillows
- Bug spray (optional)

What You Do:

1. To prepare for your camping trip, help your children write out a list of what needs to be "packed" for the trip. Make sure you think about things to eat, what you will need to sleep, and any games you will play. This is a great way to teach your kids to think and plan ahead!
2. Your children should bring along activities they would like to play with the family. For example, a ball and gloves, a Frisbee, a guitar, a deck of cards, a game of checkers, horseshoes, bubbles, butterfly nets, a paint set with brushes and paper, or a camera. There are many fun things you can do on your camping trip that don't require much in the way of materials or technology.
3. Have everyone from the family write about a time when they had fun with Dad. Collect the stories to read around the campfire (or lantern) when you go camping.
4. Make a list of camping rules to follow. For example: you can only go into the house for a potty break, or you can only use the grill for cooking dinner, but otherwise no access to technology allowed. This is a good way to be sure your family actually takes a camping vacation, and won't be tempted to go back inside to watch a favorite TV show.
5. Encourage the kids to pack up all of the camping supplies, and move them out to the campground.
6. Help them set up the tent and prepare the campsite. Removing rocks and sticks from the sleeping and sitting area will help make the camping experience more comfortable. Also, be sure to keep flashlights handy so you don't have to go searching for them once it gets dark.

Get the whole family excited about the camping experience by playing games, cooking outside, and gathering together for a nice meal and story time.