

Fun, fun, fun till daddy takes the... away

Tech-G@L 

By Beth A. Martin



I am a single mom. That is hard on its own. When you factor in a fulltime job, the economy, and an ex who pays when he wants to, it's even harder to stretch you money.

Here are some cool survival tips on having fun, but staying within your budget.

Here are the freebies.

My son has a blue camo tent and my daughter has a pink camo tent.

We set them up in the living room and had an indoor camping sleepover. I even let each one invite a friend over for the night.

If you don't have a tent, make one with chairs and sheets.

I have a wood burning fireplace. We collected long sticks from my yard and roasted hotdogs for dinner and marshmallows for dessert inside the house in the fireplace. You can always have a bonfire outside and do the same thing.

Take a snow day with the kids. I live and work in western NC and the children have missed 12 days of school. My road and driveway were covered in snow and it was too dangerous to go out and go to work, so I worked from home. During my lunch break, I took the kids out and we sled and played in the snow.

Take them to the state park and hike (and creek). We hiked all over WNC this past summer. The kids even helped me find the parks and maps on the Internet and pack lunches.

My children love to help me cook, whether it's just stirring the noodles for mac and cheese or measuring, mixing or spooning the cookie dough.

Here are the low cost dates.

Take them to the dollar store let them pick out bubbles, balloons, balls, sidewalk chalk or other outside toys. I already had a plastic above the ground pool, so I filled that with water. We also filled some balloons with water and I let them play outside with their new things and let them splash around for the afternoon. Now my daughter is a bit older but she still enjoys the outside fun, we draw. This is our Saturday or Sunday after chores fun day!

Set a goal for their grades, chores, attendance, etc. When they meet their goal, treat them to McDonald's for dinner, the cost of 3 big kid Happy Meals is less than \$10. We do this once a semester as a reward!

Take them to the local grocery store and let them pick out and buy dinner. They think that

this is the coolest. Give them the money and let them pick the meal, push the cart, approach the register and check out all by themselves. How important and grown-up they will feel.

Take them to the local video store and let them pick the video and watch it with them (no matter what they pick out). One little extra super fun thing is for you to make old fashion (Jiffy-type) popcorn on a burner (of course with their help).

Plan a family game night. If you have a gaming system, play a game with them once in awhile. This is actually my son's favorite thing, even when I just watch and tell him that he is doing great. If you do not, there are many kid friendly website with games on the Internet. If you do not have access to either of these, grab a board game or a deck of cards and play Go Fish or Old Maid with them. They will treasure that time with you!

Read a book with them and then discuss it or make your own.

Have a breakfast date and then go to church.

Help them clean their room. Help them sort out their old toys and organize what they still want to keep. Then have them put the toys that they no longer want in a box and take it to a donation center such as the Red Cross or Salvation Army.

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