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WD's copy director (a.k.a. main wordsmith) shares her Friday afternoon insights about life after 40. School's out, summer's officially arrived... and thus the dreaded summer reading list. My son came home with his other day, and my heart just sank. (Many of you have teenagers, and I bet your heart has also sunk.) Please understand—I like to read. My grandmother taught me early and I haven't stopped since, except to pick up my head long enough to go to college (actually, it's more reading, so it's technically not counting), marrying and have a child. I even have a line of work that allows me to read all day. My husband is the same way, thank God; a friend of ours once noticed that one of the things she liked to visit us is that he and I can both read peacefully in the same room without saying a word — and that meant that she could too. Somehow we produced a child who doesn't need to read as he needs oxygen. But, fortunately for us, he has other interests. What raises the question: Do we need a summer reading list? This summer my son will be a counsellor-in-training at a bedroom for a month, where he will teach children canoeing (a great passion of his). And we're all going on holiday for a week after that. This leaves him with about four weeks to read three weighty books and answer questions from a handout. Even if your child isn't so busy, isn't it summer about not being busy, or have time to pursue outside interests? During the school year children study harder than ever. So why not have a little downtime for the things they don't get to do during the year? Here's what I'd like to see: one book from a recommended list (just to hold a hand), one book of the child's choice (to strengthen the idea that reading should be a pleasure). If the goal is to create lifelong readers, like my husband and me, the pleasure choice is as important as the must-read. How do you feel about summer reading? Share your opinion in the Comments section. This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported on this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at piano.io fstop123/E+/Getty Images One of the great things about increasing a preteen is that they are at an age when they can take more responsibility and even give back to their schools, communities and other organizations. One of the ways in which tweens can contribute is through service projects. Some middle schools even require them to return students by participating in community service projects, whether as a class or on their own. By participating or volunteering, your child can teach leadership skills, a bit about the community in which he or she lives in and even a bit about his or her own interests and passions. He or she can also learn a little more about how and support groups function, and how challenging it can be at times to work through the proper channels to get the job done. In the end, however, it is very likely that your child will learn how satisfying it can be to help out and lend a hand. If your child wants to tackle a service project, the ideas below can offer some inspiration. Give back to the School: It may not be your child's first choice, but the chance is that his or her school can take a little update or benefit from some improvements. The principal may have a wish list of projects for the school, such as creating a butterfly garden, painting the girls' dressing room, or cleaning and painting the orchestra. If your child's school cannot use its services, a local primary school or kindergarten might just have the service project awaiting him. Projects for a kindergarten or elementary may include holding a book trip, restoring playgroup equipment, or mentoring students to school in subjects such as reading or mathematics. Clean up a park: Your local park or nature trail has probably seen better days and can use a little cleanup. Contact the park ranger or local parks and recreation director for permission and advice on what needs to be done. Trash picks are always needed at popular destinations, but it is also possible that your child can work on cleaning a track, hanging bird houses or making insightful brochures for visitors to read. Work an event: There are numerous ways in which your child can help at an event or fundraiser. If your tweet has an interest in a specific cause, he or she may contact and present the local chapter to help out at the next major event or fundraiser. Non-profit groups can use your child to look in runners for a marathon or 5K, or your child can eventually sell food at a concession point. Just make sure your tween chooses an organization that he or she is truly interested in and trying to suit his or her skills or talents with volunteer work possibilities. Educate the Public: Service projects may include projects that educate the community about a local concern or need, as well as the solutions or actions needed to tackle those concerns. Getting the word out on causes or public concerns is not an easy service project to adopt, but the work can truly prove beneficial in the end. For example, your child may decide to adopt the issue of school bullying, and ways to prevent or manage the situation. Other issues may include encouraging the use of local recycling programs or the benefits of eating locally grown products and other foods. Organize a row: If your child does not have an enormous amount of time to spend on a project, organizing a row can be a good option for him or her. He or she can ride a book or toy for a local library or preschool organize, or maybe your tween can drive for a specific group of individuals or elsewhere, such as after an earthquake, hurricane or another event that requires relief efforts. Thank you for your feedback! What are your concerns? VideoLifehacker Originals10. Eliminate pants with Solutions. Hot weather can often bring a recurring invasion by a legion of food-infestation, wall creeping miscrediting, but it is no reason to turn to toxic traps and toxins or expensive exterminators. A solution as safe and simple as strategic baby powder can turn the tide, or you can bring larger guns with a homemade killer. Note that the baby powder also kills the small mistakes, but by confusion and disorientation rather than, well, murder. (Original posts: baby powder, homebrew killer). Do you have some ants? Blogger Jake Ludington gets rid of his side with baby powder. Read moreG/O Media may get a commission9. Make a beach tote of plastic bags. This is not exactly a beginner project for newcomer to the world of hook, but creating a beach-friendly shoulder to bag-sand falls right through the mesh, while the material is waterproof-both reuse that ball of grocery bags in your broom cabinet and is a guaranteed brag, wandering, conversation piece on the sand. Here is some help making the substance (thank you, KCBlueGal), and here's an overview of how it's done. (Original post) If your cockpans are overwhelmed with plastic grocery bags and you feel smart, break out the... Read more8. Keep flying mistakes at bay the non-toxic way. Nothing ruins a summer picnic faster than an attack of flying insects. If you have a nest near your yard, or a campsite to defend, attract a yellow jacket and attract both distractions and defeats the little guys with a piece of raw fish and some simple meeting, and a non-toxic spray bottle mix makes you feel a lot better than loading a screenshot of the multi-warning things around the little ones. (Original posts: Yellow jackets, DIY insecticide). The Alaska Outdoor Journal publishes instructions on making a yellow jacket trap from soap... Read more7. Blow child-stunned bubbles with a DIY wall. Kids (and kids at heart) get a carefree kick from blowing bubbles, but you can hit the chintzy plastic walls and bottles for some serious head-sized spheres. Using a homemade solution and a DIY version of the 1980s staple Bubble Thing, you'll probably find yourself competing with the taps for a turn. Photo by Limbo Post (Original Post). Have a little fun in the backyard this weekend with the kids blowing enormous, three-foot-plus... Read more6. Make some easy go summer treats. These are the kinds of things you think about wistly when the hottest season's finally pass-a relaxing glass of sun tea, a cool-yet-energetic journal ice coffee (and its cold-brewed version), and, if you have a little time and some culinary ideas, food slowly cooked into your own BBQ sauce. The sun tea post generated a little healthy back-and-forth on the merits of food safety versus slow-steep enjoyment, but most anyone trying a little will have a hard time turning it off in favor of precaution. (Original posts: Suntea, ice-cream coffee, BBQ sauce). Spring boasted here in New York, and it's that time of year again - time for icy coffee! Read more5. meer5. outside with sun heat. Turning on the oven in summer is no one's idea of a cool, relaxing evening, and not everyone has access to, or the time to work, a grid. Why not harness the power of that bright burning sphere out there to do a little eco-friendly cooking? You don't want to get slow-roasted shoulder, but you can get some real cooking done with a parabolic turtle heater, or go super-simple with a cardboard box oven. Either way, it's a guaranteed gas impresser, and a fairly simple backyard/roof project (Original posts: Parabolic cooker, sunbox oven). Website Ecobites details how to cook with the power of the sun with your own DIY solar cooker. In... Read more4. Hang heat blocking curtains. Direct sunlight can make any space in an oven and contribute to your home's overall heat in summer. To keep unused rooms dark or avoid monstrous A/C accounts, use the same foam-and-foil things they make before shocking out blockers and hanging it as a removable curtain. You can either buy the stuff and hang it, or make it yourself for super-cheap blocking. As blogger Emily Gertz proves, you don't have to completely block out the sun to make a cooling difference, just eliminate unnecessary heat (Original mail). If the sun beats on your windows this summer bowls the place-or just making your air... Read more3. Build your own air conditioner (three ways). If money or logistics prevents you from keeping a space cool with a commercial air conditioner, take a hint of some overheated and super-inspired hackers. Cool off your garage, sheep, or summer school dorm room with the \$30 DIY air conditioner, which uses a long bucket to circulate ice-refrigerated water through the back of a fan. Upgrading places a water pump to work and use a smaller, less junk water source, and the advanced level integrated bucket/fan melts creates a solid unit that throws cold air on you. At the very least plugging a shallow bowl of ice in front of your fan can help you cool down. Any one of these DIY air conditioners is worth it if you feel sick like you peel Saran Wrap when you get up from your seat this season (Original posts: \$30 version, upgrade, advanced). If the July heat is killing your productivity, there are some simple things you can do to cool down... Read more2. Build your own underwater camera housing. Click diy hacker Kip Kay has not spent hundreds of dollars taking some cool underwater shots, nor should you. Its \$10 solution requires a .50-caliber ammo box (the kind easily found at an army/fleet shop), some Plexiglas, waterproof adhesive, and Velcro, and a savings hour or two to piece it all together. While it is meant for a video camera that you can set up to record and fall into the water, another camera with continuous shooting or a long timer can go in for a nice shot. (Original mail).1. Refresh a drink in two minutes flat. The guests come within a few minutes, the grid is ready, the sun is out, and oh, crap, you have forgotten to soft drinks/beer/water/white wine. Skip the excuses, grab a bucket, some ice, a little salt, and start sending your drinks around. Thanks to Mithbuster Adam Savage's sage advice, any party, last-minute dinner, or any other opportunity that required cold drinks just a much less complicated -unless you have his advice on the fire buster literally (Original post). Mithbusters TV show host Adam Savage drops science on how to make a hot screenshot of Coke cold in the bottom... Read more What DIY or geek projects do you hope to keep yourself busy with this summer? What hot weather sizes of our archives have we beaten over? Tell us everything about your project passions in the comments. comments.

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