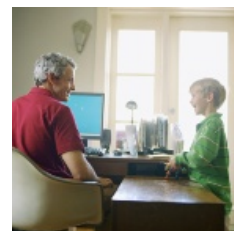




## Managing School Holidays and Vacations

Not surprisingly, some single and working parents have grown to dread school vacations, legal holidays (like Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Washington's Birthday), and "teacher in-service days." These are days when the child is out of school but parents usually have to be at work. To make matters worse, care givers whom you might rely on at other times of the year often ask for time off during holidays, and community activities like art classes and Scouting often are cancelled too.



The good side of these situations is that you know they are coming and can plan for them. To help in that process, get copies of your child's school schedule as early as possible so you are aware of vacations several months in advance. Children's vacation schedules often dictate family vacation plans. With sufficient advance notice, you may be able to block out your own vacation time to coincide with that of your youngster.

Few parents have as much vacation time available as do their children, so arrangements have to be made for child care and supervision within the frame work of the demands of the parents' jobs. If your spouse has some flexibility in his or her work schedule, divide the home responsibilities so one of you takes time off during different parts of the children's vacation. Some couples are able to work out a plan where Mom is home in the morning, and Dad replaces her in the afternoon; perhaps one or both can work flexible schedules (6 A.M. to 2 P.M.; 2:30 P.M. to 10:30 P.M.) So that at least one parent is home at all times.

Fortunately, businesses are becoming more sensitive to the family needs of their employees. The federal Medical and Family Leave Act of 1993 is helpful to parents upon the birth or adoption of a child, or when a child is ill, but it does not have any provisions covering school holidays and vacations.

Sometimes neither you nor your spouse will be able to get off work. Or you will need a backup or alternative strategy for unexpected job demands or the sudden loss of a caretaker, both of which require some last-minute juggling of schedules. It is important that school-age children are always supervised, directly if possible and indirectly if not. Indirect supervision means providing a safe environment and a structured schedule of activities, including regular times to check in, even by phone, with a responsible adult. This latter option should be considered only for mature preteenagers and is never the preferred alternative.

When you can't break away from the office, another option is to call upon extended family members to help. Some parents are able to work out a timetable with several families, where each assumes the caretaking responsibilities for all the children one day a week, or they trade hours of babysitting with each other. Some high school and college students, or after-school child care employees, are willing to work on holidays, perhaps coming to your home to assume the care of the children from several families. (Many high schools and colleges have job-placement offices to find employment for students on vacation; ask for and check references before hiring these young adults for child care.) You may also inquire about special holiday programs and camps that might be planned by local YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other community organizations. If none exist, gather some parents together and, as a group, urge local organizations or city leaders to provide holiday activities for children.

For some parents of school-age children, the best long-term solution is to work at home all the time, often in a small home-based business of their own. However, while this can be an ideal option, it is not available to everyone, and working at home poses problems of its own.

**Last Updated** 3/8/2022

**Source** Caring for Your School-Age Child: Ages 5 to 12 (Copyright © 2004 American Academy of Pediatrics)

The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

