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# HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!

## Fun Ways to Celebrate with Kids

by Katie Kavulla

**T**o little ones, celebrating the Fourth of July usually means one thing—fireworks! Yet, as parents know, by the time the sun goes down and before the sky show even starts, youngsters can be sleepy-eyed and ready for bed. These 10 fun daytime activities will make the most of the holiday for everyone.

### **Make a Statue of Liberty crown.**

Transform the entire family into Lady Liberty. Take the patriotic creativity to whatever level the kids like—metallic paint, glue and glitter or just some tinfoil from the kitchen. Construction paper makes great headbands, or try paper plates for sturdier ones. Repurposed empty toilet paper and paper towel rolls make excellent starting points for homemade torch replicas.

### **Have a patriotic bike parade.**

Round up all the neighborhood kids and their bikes. Have everyone agree to decorate their own bike at home and then meet for a parade; or hold a bike-decorating party at your house; the garage and driveway are suitable spots. Think streamers, painted tin cans on

string trailing behind bikes, balloons—anything goes.

### **Read about America's birthday.**

Stop by the library or a neighborhood bookstore to pick up *The Story of America's Birthday*, by Patricia Pingry and illustrated by Stacy Venturi-Pickett, or another early American history children's book. Toddlers on up will enjoy learning why we celebrate American independence.

**Make 50 states cookies.** A set of cookie cutters for all 50 states is available for a price, but it's even more creative to hunt up an old map or atlas and use it as a template for cutting out each state. After mixing and baking, let little ones go to town decorating them with red, white and blue toppings. Search online for tips on making healthier cookies that taste yummy.

**Watch American Legends.** This oldie but goodie video from Walt Disney tells the story of such fabled American figures as Johnny Appleseed and Paul Bunyan. Check out a copy from the library or a favorite movie rental source.

**Sing a patriotic song.** Songs about America don't have to be the classic versions—pick up a CD of patriotic songs or download some onto a home computer or iPod. The *Wee Sing America* CD is a hit with all ages.

**Start the Fourth with a red-white-and-blue breakfast.** Set a festive mood for the whole day with a healthy parfait. In clear glasses, layer blueberries for the blue, strawberries and raspberries for the red and yogurt for the white. Sprinkle some hearty granola in-between the layers for a satisfying crunch.

**Make a care package for our armed forces.** The Fourth of July is a great time to remember the special men and women that are selflessly serving our country. Have the entire family assemble a care package of items or make special cards; even the smallest efforts show the family's appreciation. Check with a local veterans affairs office or the Internet on how to ship the gift overseas.

**Create a flag for the front door.** For an easy and fun twist on hanging a flag this year, try making one from crepe paper for the front door or window. Pick up some red-and-white streamers from the store for the stripes. Use a piece of blue construction paper and draw or paint white stars onto the upper left corner; then fasten it up so that the "flag" hangs downward, with the streamer stripes going from top to bottom. Either leave the stripes flying free toward the bottom or tape them down, like on top.

**Celebrate with the East Coast.** If staying up late isn't a good option, but kids are begging to watch the fireworks, they can catch a full fireworks extravaganza from home via the magic of TV and the Internet. Get everyone into pajamas and watch one of the many media specials from the comfort of home. This especially works for families west of the Eastern Time zone; it may require pushing bedtimes back a bit, but there will be no fireworks crowds to battle en route home to bed afterwards.

*Katie Kavulla is a mother and freelance writer in Seattle who regularly contributes to Red Tricycle, an online city guide that provides fun things for parents to do with their kids (RedTri.com).*

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