



## Summer Farm Lesson Plans

**Cultivate a classroom on your farm this summer. To make learning successful (and fun!), use the tips below and download our summer farm lesson plans.**

Photo by Terry Wild

Summer on the farm is full of educational activities for homeschooled children of all ages. Farm. School. Summer.

At first glance, these words don't seem to go together. "Farm" may conjure images of long, hard hours of physical work during the growing season, while "school" paints an image of linoleum-tiled classrooms filled with wooden desks in tidy rows facing the teacher up front.

Of course, the word "summer" ushers in the opposite of these, where freedom, playfulness and full-throttle fun abound.

As a Wisconsin farmer and homeschooling parent, I hear the trio of words and ideas start rolling through my brain. For farm-based homeschooling families like ours, each season—even summer—brings a new array of home-schooling opportunities.

Blending these summer educational opportunities on the farm with the reality that this is usually the busiest time of the growing season can be a challenge. But with a dash of organization and planning, summer can take on a deeper, richer meaning for everyone in your family. Here are six general strategies to keep in mind:

### 1. Plan and organize.

For some home-schooling families, a little structure goes a long way in producing results. Others need routine and have designated certain themes for each day, such as "Science Mondays" or "Field-trip Fridays." We've gone on free tours of community facilities, but be sure to call ahead for specifics.

### 2. Embrace spontaneity.

Embrace the fun of summertime with a dash of education. Just after the kids put on their pajamas, head outside for a star-identification lesson. Storm rolling in? Sounds ripe for a lesson on weather fundamentals. After a full day of field work, my husband, John, and I will announce that it's "cultural appreciation night" and head to our town square for a free community concert in the park.

### 3. Scrapbook the summer.

Track your summer-learning journey with an ongoing record to which everyone in the family can contribute. This can be a traditional paper scrapbook with photos, paper clippings and drawings, or in today's digital age, think about an online blog or posting videos on YouTube.

### 4. Think "one-room schoolhouse."

While the curriculum ideas below suggest general appropriate age ranges, don't feel limited or restricted by a child's grade level. Summer gifts us with the opportunity to draw inspiration from those one-room schoolhouse days, where various age groups worked and learned together.

### 5. Focus on process, not product.

Remember that learning is in the journey, not the destination. I may intend to hike around the farm with my son, Liam, to identify prairie plants but discover a new batch of baby bunnies along the way and spend the next hour sitting quietly and observing their antics. Similarly, the morning egg-collecting chores can turn into a lengthy lesson on the natural cycle of life and death. Embrace the moment and don't feel obligated to stick with Plan A when a little serendipity may lead you to an even more rewarding places of knowledge.

### 6. Recap and discuss.

Take time to review and discuss completed activities. Ask open-ended questions to get kids to talk about and process what they just experienced, enhancing the learning process. We don't typically formally "test" Liam on summer farm-learning opportunities, but we find that focused, process-oriented discussions cause educational activities to take on deeper meaning.

As your summertime learning journey evolves, embrace the magic of the season and the moment. Savor the experiential classroom on your farm with an open mind, and rekindle your inner child with every identified bug, star and opportunity.



For summer home-schooling ideas, download the following lesson plans: The Circle of Life on the Farm (ages 4 to 7)  
Farm Connections: Connecting to our History, Community and the World (ages 8 to 10)  
Grow Your Own Farm-based Business (ages 11 to 12)

Click for more farm-based lesson plans. About the Author: Lisa Kivirist is the co-author of *ECOpreneur* (New Society Publishing, 2008) and *Rural Renaissance* (New Society Publishers, 2009). She and her husband, John Ivanko, homeschool their son, Liam, on their Wisconsin farm and bed-and-breakfast, Inn Serendipity, completely powered by renewable energy. Read more about homeschooling in her article in the July/August issue of Hobby Farm Home.