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**TRIED AND TRUE TIPS  
FOR THE TRANSITION  
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**FILM REVIEW** By Jack Kyser  
**Jungle Cruise**

Read online at: [www.austinfamily.com/films](http://www.austinfamily.com/films)



Ten-year-old Cover Kid Winner Ella loves spending time with family and friends, acting, singing, dancing, traveling, shopping, crafting and writing. She is also trilingual (English, Spanish, French), portrays Briga Larson in AMC's Fear the Walking Dead and is a KIDS FIRST! Film Critic. Cover photo by Jordan Ashley Photography.



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

ANNETTE LUCKSINGER

*Lucksinger is a mom of two and author of the guidebook and app Exploring Austin With Kids.*

When my kids were babies and one was going through a tough stage, everyone would tell me, "Just wait. In a few months, they'll be a different kid and onto the next stage." Last week, I was scanning a thread for fellow parents of incoming college freshmen, and I came across that same advice: "Be prepared for your kid to change into a new person their first semester."

As parents, we become accustomed to change – but those transitions can still be challenging. Is your young child ready to make the big jump to kindergarten? At what age can you

safely leave your child home alone? How can you help prepare your preteens (especially those who spent a year learning at home) for the independence, responsibility and social pressures of middle school? What do you do if they come home wanting to make big changes to their diet and lifestyle?

This Back-to-School issue focuses on such changes. Shifting from summer to fall, we also introduce our Education Guide and Young Writers Contest.

So, check off those last summer bucket list activities and start school shopping. And wish me the best as I prepare for my first kiddo to leave the nest to head to college. Changes never cease. Embrace them – and have a wonderful end of summer and start to the new school year!

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# Play it product recalls **SAFE**

## Government Recalls Children's Nightgowns, Stroller Adapters and Rattle Sets



Auranso Official has issued a recall for seven styles of **children's nightgowns**. The nightgowns fail to meet the federal flammability standards for children's sleepwear, posing a risk of burn injuries to children. These items were sold exclusively at Amazon from January 2021 through June 2021

for between \$11 and \$19. Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled garments and contact Auranso Official for instructions on returning the garments with free shipping to receive a full refund.



Uppababy has issued a recall for about 86,000 **stroller adapters** included with some models of RumbleSeats due to the seat detaching. Some injuries have been reported from falls. The strollers were sold at juvenile specialty stores

from October 2014 through July 2019 for between \$180 and \$200. Consumers should go to [uppbaby.com](http://uppbaby.com) to confirm their RumbleSeat accessory adapters are included in the recall. If the adapter does not have a yellow tab, immediately stop using the recalled RumbleSeat accessory with the adapters and fill out the form on the Uppababy website to receive a free replacement adapter set.



Walgreens is recalling about 54,000 **Disney Baby Winnie the Pooh Rattle Sets**. The feet on the Winnie the Pooh rattle can detach, posing a choking hazard to young children. Walgreens has received eight reports of the

feet on the Winnie the Pooh rattle detaching. No injuries have been reported. The rattles were sold at Walgreens stores nationwide from September 2019 through January 2020 for about \$10. Consumers should immediately take the recalled rattle away from young children and contact Walgreens for a full refund.

*The US Consumer Products Safety Commission works to protect the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer products.*

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- Sarah F. (6yrs old)

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# AROUND

# Austin

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## Students Team Up for Carbon Capture

Austin-based biotech company Reactive Surfaces Ltd., LLP (RSL) will collaborate with high school students from St. Stephen's Episcopal School to compete in the XPRIZE Carbon Removal Competition. The competition is funded by SpaceX, the Musk Foundation and Elon Musk himself. Teams will face a number of milestone requirements before grand prize announcements in April 2025.



Students will study the use of CCC-MIVS, depicted here on a large scale. Photo courtesy of Reactive Surfaces, Ltd.

The competition aims to accelerate innovation for durable, low-cost, scalable and sustainable carbon removal solutions. Removing carbon dioxide gas from the atmosphere and sequestering it for long periods of time is one of many approaches to mitigate the effects of climate change.

RSL has bioengineered a paint in which algae photosynthesize and sequester carbon – mimicking the functionality of lichen, or nature's "paint." In fact, Carbon Capture Coatings on Massively Iterated Vertical Surfaces (CCC-MIVS) are 170 times more effective at capturing carbon dioxide than trees.

By collaborating with RSL, the SSTX Spartans – a team of high school students from St. Stephen's Episcopal School – will compete in the XPRIZE Carbon Removal Student Competition, which offers \$5 million in student prizes. The SSTX Spartans will submit a proposal to test the efficacy of CCC-MIVS in a simulated Martian environment, taking RSL's technology one planet further to test a means of terraforming on Mars.



Lucy Pieratt was chosen as Athlete of the Month. Photo courtesy of Austin Youth Fitness.

## Athlete of the Month

Meet the August Athlete of the Month for Austin Youth Fitness (AYF), Lucy Pieratt. Lucy will be a third grader this fall and is a participant in AYF's Cycle the City Camp. Improving in swim team this year, Lucy took 16 seconds off her backstroke record. She is really working hard on biking up "misery hill" by Reed Park without having to stop and walk. She is also loving archery at summer camp and has gotten two bull's-eyes. Coaches nominated Lucy because she is so fun to be around, works hard and has improved so much as a rider.

Each month, AYF coaches select one young athlete who really pushes the bar to excel. The organization seeks to encourage active lifestyles and promote fitness fun. Their mission is to inspire kids to love running and biking while also teaching them the proper form and technique to be lifelong athletes.

## by the numbers



**#2** back-to-school shopping is the second largest shopping season in the U.S., topped only by Christmas

Source: [consumerdecisions.org](http://consumerdecisions.org)



**1 in 3** parents understand teenage slang (e.g., lit, snatched, sick, shook and thirsty)

Source: [solitared.com](http://solitared.com)



**8.25%** amount of sales tax you save when school shopping tax-free Aug. 6-8

source: [comptroller.texas.gov](http://comptroller.texas.gov)

## Youth Leading the Charge

Gen Z for the Trees (Z4T) is an entirely youth-led initiative with a mission to engage youth on rainforest protection, overcome the oversimplification of conservation work and shift the narrative on climate change from despair to optimism and action.



This summer, the group launched the campaign: "A Universal Call to Action To Protect Standing Forests: Gen Z for the Trees Convenes Global Coalition To End Deforestation by 2030." From now until November, these youth will conduct research, outreach to corporations that have high potentials to minimize deforestation, organize action events and work to bring more partners into the coalition. If you are interested in learning more or supporting their work, see @genzforthetrees on Instagram or visit [linktr.ee/genzforthetrees](http://linktr.ee/genzforthetrees).



## Punny Book

DONUT worry, this is not your typical book! Native Austinite Marie Saba has a new book out that is fun for the whole family. Don't Worry Be Hap-PEA: 101 Deliciously Clever Food Puns brings food to life through a compilation of quirky, creative and inspirational food puns. With topics ranging from pop culture icons (think Celine Dijon and Robert Brownie, Jr.) to tourist attractions (St. Peter's Basilica) to cartoon characters (Elmer Fudge), these tasty puzzles are as intriguing and delightful as they are appetizing.



Don't Worry, Be Ha-PEA reminds us all that we can find humor in the most unlikely of places — the back of the pantry or the bottom of the veggie drawer. Lighthearted, entertaining and appropriate for all ages, it's a fun read for fans of witty humor and good food.

## We're Looking for a Few Good Kids ... To Brag On!

If you know a young person deserving of recognition or a youth group working to positively impact our community, let us hear about it. They just might end up in next month's "Around Austin" section of Austin Family magazine! Send details and a photo to editor2003@austinfamily.com.

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In the heart of the city, Alliance Children's Garden in Butler Park has been completely renovated to make it a unique space for all ages to enjoy.



## New Children's Garden Opens

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department recently announced that the Alliance Children's Garden, a new 2-acre recreational space within Butler Park, is officially open!

The new space features nature-play elements, musical-play equipment, and inter-generational amenities unlike any other park in the city. Kids and adults can relax on benches, swing on giant swings or play a giant game of chess. There are also plenty of opportunities to be active. Climb hills or climbing structures, duck through tunnels, play in the sand or splash in the splash pad.

## A Million Pounds

Austin Creative Reuse (ACR) hit a huge milestone over the summer as they received their one-millionth pound of material donations. Nearly ten years ago, the ACR collected their first donations, roughly 300 pounds of fabric, yarn, paper and more. They have since grown to fill a large space open to the community where they accept ten times that on a busy donation day. Donations come from individuals, schools and businesses in the community with the goal to keep valuable materials out of the landfill.

The ACR provides a great place to get affordable craft supplies for the classroom, hobbies or home projects. You can also sign up for crafting classes at [austincreativereuse.org](http://austincreativereuse.org).

Austin Creative Reuse celebrates one million pounds of donations from the community to be recycled and upcycled for new use.



# Must-Do This August

- Go swimming!
- Get child vaccinations up-to-date
- Go school shopping on Tax-Free Weekend

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what, so they hold onto their summer ways until that first painful morning. The second camp is "Slide Into School." They incrementally institute earlier bedtimes and morning alarms, striving for a calm new normal by opening day.

We know that most contemporary screens left unmodified deliver a powerful white-hued light, closer to midday sun than soft sunset. This light can work against desires to wind down, even against a person's internal clock. Most devices have ways to adjust the light to be warmer and less intense. Apple has Night Shift and there are many free apps. Even TVs can be adjusted – try Cinema mode in the settings menu.

## WINDING DOWN

It's August in Texas and that can only mean one thing - it's darned hot! But the sun is setting a little bit earlier, and some back-to-school outfits are coming together. Change is in the (still hot) air.

I see two camps of thought about adjusting to school time. The first is "Delay the Inevitable."

Some families figure that the early wake-up is going to be a shock no matter

Regardless of which camp you fall in, research suggests a 90-minute screen-free time for optimal sleep readiness. If that's out of the question for your digital home, try these steps to ease into bedtime:



As summer turns to fall, shift family movie nights to the weekends when you can stay up a little later. Friday nights are Family Movie Nights on the PBS KIDS 24-hour channel 18.4 or the free livestream, starting at 7 p.m. and going until you say so!

Benjamin Kramer, PhD, is the director of education for Austin PBS.

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# Tried and True Tips for the Transition to Middle School

BY JESS ARCHER

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many parents and tweens did not have a normal transition into middle school during 2020 and 2021. So, this fall may be your child's first real, in-person middle school experience, and that can feel overwhelming for both of you. As your tween is going through a rollercoaster of feelings regarding middle school life, here

are some tried and true tips to help you and your student navigate the start (or re-start) of the middle school years.



## 1 Realize your child is now in the driver's seat.

Not literally, yet! But that's the best way for you and your tween to approach communication with middle school teachers. During elementary school, your child's teachers sent sweet, detailed weekly or monthly newsletters to keep you informed of what was happening in the classroom. Say goodbye to those. Middle school teachers often have three to five classes that rotate through their doors every day, and the pacing and structure of those classes can vary greatly depending on students' needs. That makes informative class newsletters or emails an improbability.

Teachers may still communicate with parents over email or the phone, but expect your student to now be the one in charge of her own learning and academic experience. Middle school teachers will explain to students how to check school email at least once every day for direct messages from them and use BLEND and online grading programs for assignments, due dates and grades.

There's an old saying that says: "The squeaky wheel gets the grease." Encourage your child to be assertive when they have questions and to advocate for themselves. Most middle schools issue their students a personal laptop. That means they can and should directly reach out to their teachers. Remind them that people who teach middle school really do like tweens and are there to help.



## 2 Don't be alarmed if grades take a dip.

Your former A-student's grades may drop a bit. There's a lot coming at your middle schooler every day, and even straight-A scholars might rebel a bit. New classes, a handful of new teachers and a host of new social and emotional dilemmas can put even the most academically-minded student in knots. It can feel very difficult for them to stay on top of grades like they

but your positive encouragement can help your child branch out a bit.

## 4 Remember your own pre-teen angst.

During middle school, tweens are desperate for degrees of independence. Recall your own pre-teen self and how your parents didn't seem to understand you at all during those strange years. You may get

session with the counselor by email any time and will be amazed by how much better they will feel by opening up to a trusted adult.

## 6 Read the student handbook.

It may sound strange, but it's good advice. If there's one way to be informed, this is it. The student handbook for your child's middle school includes a wealth of information about school policies that you and your child need to know, such as absentee information, disciplinary measures, technology policies, the ins and outs of dress code protocols and students' rights should they experience bullying or harassment. You can easily access your child's school student handbook on your district's website. Take some time to answer your own questions by reading over pertinent information from the handbook and discuss the school policies with your tween.

---

*“Your grace and kindness as a parent can help them navigate their new, complex academic life.”*

---

did in late elementary school where the learning environment was more controlled and directed for them. Go easy on your tween if this happens. Your grace and kindness as a parent can help them navigate their new, complex academic life.

more eye rolls than hugs. Don't take it personally. As a parent, find ways to widen the boundaries a bit to help your child feel and experience more autonomy.

## 3 Encourage your child to stay engaged.

Your child may seem disinterested in enrichment activities. Fear of social rejection and embarrassment over bodily changes during puberty can all cause tweens to want to disengage from extracurricular activities. As a parent, help your tween find some enrichment activities outside of school hours. This could mean a wide range of things such as sports, church youth group, the arts or community service projects. Your middle schooler might whine about it,

## 5 Get to know the counselors.

The middle school years can bring with them big mood swings and identity questions, at the same time there is a growing independence from parents. So, while your tween might not want to talk to you about all of their feelings, middle school counselors are highly trained and deeply sympathetic to the issues students are facing. Encourage your student to seek out resources the school provides. During the first weeks of school, students will be introduced to their grade-level counselor. They can schedule a talk

## 7 Give your middle schooler time to adjust.

It can take about three months to feel oriented to a new school setting. Remind your child to go easy on himself. Rather than stressing, encourage him to reach out to teachers if he feels overwhelmed. Right around Thanksgiving break, take stock and check in. Most likely, you'll both be pleasantly surprised and amazed by how much adjustment has been made to middle school life.

---

*Jess Archer is a freelance writer in Austin. She is also a certified middle school English teacher with eight years of teaching experience in schools all over Austin. Find her at [writerjessarcher.com](http://writerjessarcher.com).*

# 2021-22 education guide



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www.figmentcreativelabs.com

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www.austin.madscience.org

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www.mastergohring.com

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512-259-7999  
www.nitroswim.com

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Southeast Austin  
512-247-2303  
www.riovistafarm.net

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512-920-0554  
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## FAMILY MATTERS

BETTY RICHARDSON

*Richardson, PhD, RN, CS, LPC, LMFT, is an Austin-based psychotherapist.*

# Home Alone: At What Age Is It Safe?

**Q** My wife Marian and I are discussing when one or more of our kids ages 12, 8 and 6 can be left home alone and for what length of time. We also wonder how old a child has to be in order to be left in the car if one of us quickly runs into the store for one or two items. Can our 12-year-old babysit his siblings? We know of people who frequently leave their young children alone at home or in the car. We know this isn't right. Are there guidelines or laws for us to follow?

**A** Only a few states have laws dictating when children can be left alone. In Maryland, it is legal at age 8, and in Illinois, it is at age 14. Texas state laws do not address the age a child can be left alone but hold an adult caregiver accountable for adequate supervision. There are no federal laws governing when to leave a child alone as the government views this issue a parental right to raise children without interference from the federal level.

There are several things to consider when deciding whether or not to leave

a child alone and for what length of time. These things include not only age but also:

1. What is the youth's maturity level?
2. Can the child easily and quickly reach you or another designated adult, whether by phone or by walking next door?
3. Does the child have good judgment about what to do in an emergency situation?
4. Is the youth willing to stay alone and comfortable with the idea?
5. Does the child consistently follow family rules and guidelines?
6. How safe is the neighborhood and environment where you are leaving your child?

The national Safe Kids campaign supervisor recommends no child under 12 be left alone, while another source suggests that kids ages 9-12 can be left alone for up to two hours if they are mature for that age. In researching

this topic, all of the sources I found seemed to agree that kids up to age 5 or 6 should not be left alone. They need to be in a line of sight of a parent or responsible adult. When young children are out of sight, accidents happen.

Regarding when children can be left alone in a car or can babysit, the U.S. Army offers its families these guidelines that may prove helpful. A 10- or 11-year-old can be left in an unattended vehicle for a brief amount of time if the keys are removed and the handbrake is applied. The guidelines state that at age 11, a child can babysit siblings and family friends for up to two hours. At ages 12-14, a youth can babysit siblings and family friends up to three hours. It is recommended that children and youth who babysit others take the Red Cross babysitting course.

Thank you for sharing this important question for our readers. Do remember how valuable our children are and err on the side of keeping them safe.



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**LIFELINES**

BRENDA SCHOOLFIELD

*Schoolfield is a freelance medical writer based in Austin.*

# What To Do if Your Child Wants To Go Gluten-Free, Paleo or Vegan

What will you do if your child wants to start a gluten-free, paleo or vegan diet? Here are three steps to help discuss the choice with your child:

## Step 1. Find Out Your Child's Motivation

Before you react to the news, ask some questions to determine your child's motivation. Is the purpose of the diet to lose weight? Have more energy? Address a health problem? Is the motivation because friends are adopting this diet? Is there a concern for animals and saving the planet?

Listen to the reasons behind your child's decision. There may be an underlying problem that is important to address. If your child wants to lose weight, does she have a negative body image? If the purpose is to have more energy or address a health problem, there may be an undiagnosed medical condition. If the concern is for animals and the planet, there are several plant-based diets that include protein for consideration.

## Step 2. Ask Your Child To Explain the Diet

Sometimes a child wants to follow a certain diet but doesn't really understand what the diet is. Here is a brief summary of gluten-free, paleo and vegan diets:

### Gluten Free

A gluten-free diet is one that avoids gluten. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley and other grains. Bread, pancakes, cookies, cakes and other baked goods contain gluten. People with celiac disease, wheat allergy and gluten sensitivity must avoid gluten for medical reasons.

Just because a food is gluten-free doesn't mean that it's healthy. Processed gluten-free foods can be:

- Higher in fats and calories than the alternative
- Missing essential nutrients that you get when eating whole grains, including important vitamins and minerals
- Lower in fiber, an important

component for gastrointestinal health that prevents constipation.

It is difficult for a child to get enough nutrients for a healthy body on a gluten-free diet. Talk to your pediatrician first. If this type of diet is medically necessary, work with a registered dietician to make sure your child gets essential nutrients.

### Paleo

Paleo is short for Paleolithic, the early phase of the Stone Age. This weight loss diet limits food choices to the types of food that people during this time period ate. So, the diet includes only unprocessed foods, nothing in a box or wrapper. The focus is on high protein, high fiber and low carbohydrates. Foods that are allowed include grass-fed meats, poultry, seafood, eggs, fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds. Foods that aren't allowed are dairy, grains and legumes like beans, tofu and peanuts. Sugar and refined oils also are prohibited.

It is hard for children to get enough



nutrient-rich foods they need to be healthy on the paleo diet. No dairy, no whole grains, no legumes and low carbohydrates limit sources of nutrients. Dairy is an important source of calcium, which children need for bone growth and development. Whole grains and legumes are sources of vitamins, minerals and fiber. Carbohydrates are fuel for growing bodies and brains. Vegetables and fruits do contain carbohydrates, but it can be hard for a child to eat enough from these sources alone.

This diet can be expensive because of nuts, grass-fed meats and cage-free eggs. Children may not find this diet as appealing when they learn that there is no peanut butter, potatoes (French fries), cheese, ice cream, yogurt and sugar.

### Vegan

A vegan diet is a plant-based diet that avoids all animal products. Animal products include meat, poultry, fish, eggs and dairy. Some protein sources for vegan diets are tofu, tempeh, beans, lentils and nuts. It takes planning to make sure that a child is getting enough nutrients for healthy growth. You must maximize sources of vitamin B12, iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin D.

Plant-based diets have proven health and environmental benefits. Instead of a strict vegan diet, your child might start by trying a less restrictive plant-based diet. For example, the Mediterranean diet includes fish, poultry and dairy. Vegetarian diets include eggs and dairy.

### Step 3. Promote Healthy Eating Choices and a Positive Relationship With Food

Promote healthy eating choices for your entire family. Good nutrition helps prevent many serious diseases, such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, cancer and kidney disease. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020–2025 recommends choosing a variety of foods from each of the five food groups every day. These guidelines urge Americans to make wise choices:

- Eat more nutrient rich foods — more vegetables, fruits, dried peas and beans, whole grains, low or nonfat dairy, lean meats and poultry, seafood, nuts and unsaturated vegetable oils.
- Eat less sodium, saturated fat, added sugars and processed foods — less red and processed meat, sugar-sweetened foods and beverages and refined grains.

Help your child to develop a positive relationship with food. Don't label foods as "good" or "bad." Focus on a dietary pattern that builds health. Encourage mindfulness while eating, as opposed to eating in front of a TV or device screen. Eat meals together as a family as much as possible. Make mealtime a pleasant event that the whole family enjoys. Encouraging healthy dietary habits will benefit your child for a lifetime.



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## THE Learning curve

ALISON BOGLE

*Alison Bogle is a writer living in Austin with her husband and three children. A former fourth grade teacher, she now enjoys writing about children and education.*

# Is Your Child Kindergarten-Ready?

When it was time for my first baby to start kindergarten, I couldn't believe the time had gone so quickly. How could this little person be ready to spend all day away from me in the big school? Was she actually ready? By the time my twins were kindergarten-bound, I knew better what to expect, and had faith that it would all turn out all right. However, I still ran through a kinder-readiness checklist in my head to soothe my mama's heart.

"Is my child ready for kindergarten?" is an age-old question. This year, the pandemic has likely complicated the decision process further as numerous parents chose to delay kindergarten to avoid starting their children on Zoom. Still other families experienced spotty preschool attendance due to shutdowns and quarantine and may find themselves wondering if their child's kinder-readiness was affected.

Whatever your family's situation, there are clear signs that your child is ready for kindergarten. Checking off the signs of readiness below for my twins helped me to recognize that my kids were definitely

ready for school. I was the one who needed to get on board!

Your child is likely academically and emotionally ready for kindergarten if he or she:

- ▼ **Follows simple directions** At home, your child listens to and follows through with simple directions such as "put your shoes away" or "wash your hands."
- ▼ **Uses the bathroom and washes hands independently** Kindergarteners are responsible for attending to their own toilet needs. They should be able to unbutton and pull down their clothing, use toilet paper properly, flush and wash their hands thoroughly.
- ▼ **Plays well with others** Your child should be able to make friends with others as well as cooperate both one-on-one and in small groups.
- ▼ **Handles impulses and emotions** Your child generally should be able to gather himself after expressing big emotions and should be able to control impulses

such as hitting when mad, snatching toys or blurting out during storytime.

- ▼ **Sits still and pays focused attention** Look for your child to be able to sit still and attend for at least one minute per year of age, i.e. 5 minutes for a 5-year-old.
- ▼ **Recognizes some letters and numbers** Your child should be able to identify multiple lower and uppercase letters as well as numbers 1-10.
- ▼ **Knows basic colors and shapes** Your child should be able to name all primary and secondary colors, as well as most, if not all, basic shapes.
- ▼ **Shows an interest in learning** Look for your child to be curious about ideas and things she encounters.
- ▼ **Completes tasks** Your child should be able to complete tasks, even if he is not interested in them. This is a necessary skill for participating in activities that may not be engaging to him but are important nonetheless.



▼ **Follows simple rules** Does your child follow simple rules given by other adults at places like preschool, church or the library?

▼ **Handles separation** If your child occasionally cries when separating from you, that's normal, but if your child almost always struggles with separating, that may mean she is not ready for a kindergarten classroom.

▼ **Has the necessary physical stamina** Kindergarten introduces long, full days of learning and activity. If your child requires a long daily nap or tires quickly from play, he may developmentally need more time before starting kindergarten.

▼ **Self-advocates** Can your child ask for help when needed? Does she speak up when she doesn't understand something? Look for these signs of maturity in your child.

▼ **Has adequate fine motor skills** Can your child hold a pencil, trace shapes, button a shirt and write her name?

If you can check many of these boxes for your child, but not all, don't fret! Children develop at different rates and a few missing skills doesn't automatically mean a child is not ready to start school. If you are still uncertain as to whether or not your child is ready for kindergarten, discuss your concerns with your child's preschool teacher, as he or she is well-placed to make a recommendation.

You can also help your child work on some of those lagging skills so that he can have a strong start to kindergarten. A little practice working with buttons and zippers, using the appropriate amount of toilet paper and washing hands thoroughly will go a long way towards competency at school. You can help your child build fine motor skills by playing with play dough, stringing pasta necklaces, painting and coloring. To make lunchtime successful, practice

opening a lunchbox and all of those small containers in a timely manner. It is also a good idea to read to your child and ask questions about the story to help him think about what was read. This is what will happen in the classroom, and he will become familiar with the process.

If, after all of this, you're still not confident that your child is ready, remember,

you likely know best. As long as your decision to delay is based on your child and not your own fears or sense of loss, trust your instincts. Sending your child to kindergarten can certainly tug on the emotions, but using a fact-based checklist can help make the decision a little easier on the heart.



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# August 2021

## calendar

Please check [austinfamily.com](http://austinfamily.com) for daily updates to the calendar.

All Austin Public Library events can be found at [library.austintexas.gov/events](http://library.austintexas.gov/events).

Any family-friendly events can be posted at [austinfamily.com](http://austinfamily.com) and will be made live once approved. Certain restrictions apply.

### Sun 1 National Sisters Day

**Austin Humane Society Summer Kid Series.** For kids who want to be involved with the Humane Society but are too young to volunteer, 14-year-olds and younger can join the Austin Humane Society Humane Heroes Group. Summer activities continue until August 7 and will be posted on the group's Facebook page. Sessions will also be broadcast on the Austin Humane Society's YouTube channel. Virtual. FREE. [austinhumanesociety.org](http://austinhumanesociety.org).

**YMCA Summer Out Loud Challenge.** The YMCA of Austin is helping families make up for last year's "summer of COVID-19" with a free, three-week Summer Out Loud Challenge. YMCA of Austin locations, 1100 W. Cesar Chavez St. FREE. [austinyymca.org](http://austinyymca.org).

**Buda Farmers Market.** The Downtown Buda Farmers Market is a place where farmers, producers and artisans can gather to provide fresh local goods, promote sustainability and support healthy living. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. 303 Main St. [austin.com](http://austin.com).

**Heritage House Open - First Sunday.** Visit the Heritage House Museum and learn about local history. The Heritage House Partners host the museum and provide visitors with stories, memories and facts about the history of Pflugerville. 1 to 4 p.m. 901 Old Austin Hutto Rd. [library.pflugervilletx.gov](http://library.pflugervilletx.gov).

**Summer Maker Kits.** Try a new DIY craft each week through the summer. This week's project is a hummingbird feeder. Kits are available by request at the library while supplies last. Recommended for ages 16 and up. 1 to 2 p.m. Wells Branch Community Library, 15001 Wells Port Dr. [wblibrary.org](http://wblibrary.org).

**Bow Wow Reading.** With The Dog Alliance, Bow Wow Reading allows children to practice reading to a dog. Sign up in advance. 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Lake Travis Community Library, 1938 Lohman's Crossing. [laketravislibrary.org](http://laketravislibrary.org). 512-263-2885.

**Mon 2**  
**CONTINUED:** YMCA Summer Out Loud Challenge, see Sun 1.

**Tue 3**  
**Storytime and Fitness.** The Elgin Recreation Center is partnering up with the Elgin Public Library for a 15-minute, animal-inspired workout before storytime each week. 10:30 to 11 a.m. Elgin Public Library, Public Library Civic Center, 404 N. Main St. [elgintx.com](http://elgintx.com).

**Pfarmers Market.** The Pfarmers Market brings fresh, locally grown and prepared foods to the Pflugerville community. 3 to 7 p.m. Pflugerville First United Methodist Church, 500 E. Pecan St. [parks.pflugervilletx.gov](http://parks.pflugervilletx.gov).

**National Night Out.** National Night Out enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. 5 p.m. Various neighborhoods in Cedar Park. FREE. [cedarparktexas.gov](http://cedarparktexas.gov).

**CONTINUED:** YMCA Summer Out Loud Challenge, see Sun 1.

**Wed 4**  
**CONTINUED:** YMCA Summer Out Loud Challenge, see Sun 1.

**Thu 5**  
**Lego Club.** Brick-by-brick, we build according to a monthly theme. All ages are welcome. The library provides the Legos. 4 p.m. Kyle Public Library, 500 Scott St. [cityofkyle.com](http://cityofkyle.com).

**Summer 2021 Zilker Musical.** Zilker Park Theatre Productions and the City of Bee Cave proudly present Little Shop of Horrors at a new location at the Hill Country Galleria. Shows run Thursday through Sunday through August 14. Reservations are required. 8:15 p.m. Hill Country Galleria Central Plaza, 12700 Hill Country Blvd. FREE. [zilker.org/summer-2021](http://zilker.org/summer-2021).

**Fri 6**  
**Teen Chat & Chill.** For ages 12-17. New topics

every week. Come hang out. 4:30 p.m. Kyle Public Library, 500 Scott St. [cityofkyle.com](http://cityofkyle.com).

**Colony Park Back-to-School Bash.** This year families can enjoy a carnival-themed evening of fun. The event will feature free food, music, kid's activities, balloon artists and much more. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Turner-Roberts Recreation Center, 7201 Colony Park. FREE. [austintexas.gov](http://austintexas.gov).

**Movie Night.** Mobile Loaves & Fishes invites you to a movie night at Community First! Village to watch Raya and The Last Dragon (PG). 8 to 11 p.m. 9301 Hog Eye Rd. \$5. [mlf.org/community-cinema](http://mlf.org/community-cinema).

**CONTINUED:** Summer 2021 Zilker Musical, see Thu 5.

**Sat 7**  
**AISD Back-to-School Bash.** Families can get free food, fun and registration assistance for the new school year. In addition, COVID-19 vaccines, dental exams, books, booster seats and haircuts will be offered. 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Palmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Rd. FREE. [austinisd.org](http://austinisd.org).

**Baby Bloomers.** A special program during which the museum is open exclusively for children ages 3 and under with their caregivers. 8 to 10 a.m. Thinkery, 1830 Simond Ave. [thinkeryaustin.org](http://thinkeryaustin.org).

**Barton Creek Farmers Market.** 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Barton Creek Mall, 2901 S. Capital of Texas Hwy. [bartoncreekfarmersmarket.org](http://bartoncreekfarmersmarket.org).

**Market in the Park.** Spend your Saturday exploring this outdoor market in the park along Buda's historical downtown greenbelt. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Across the street from Summer Moon Cafe. [budachambertx.com](http://budachambertx.com).

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**Summer Movie Night Series.** Bring your blankets and picnics, friends and family and enjoy a movie on our 25-foot movie screen on The Lawn. 8:30 p.m. Arboretum, N. MoPac at Braker. FREE. thearboretum.com.

**CONTINUED:** Austin Humane Society Summer Kid Series, see Sun 1; Summer 2021 Zilker Musical, see Thu 5.

**Sun 8**  
**CONTINUED:** Buda Farmers Market, see Sun 1; Summer 2021 Zilker Musical, see Thu 5.

**Tue 10**  
**CONTINUED:** Storytime and Fitness, see Tue 3.

**Thu 12**  
**Summer Family Program: Music for a Change.** Sing, dance and join in as we write music to make a positive impact. 10:00 to 10:45 a.m. Bullock Texas State History Museum, 1800 N. Congress Ave. FREE. thestoryoftexas.com.

**CONTINUED:** Summer 2021 Zilker Musical, see Thu 5.

**Fri 13**  
**Movies at the Lake.** Come set up a blanket and watch The Croods: A New Age. Kyle Parks and Recreation Department is proud to present the 19th year of Movies in the Park. Please practice

safe social distancing. 8:30 to 10:30 p.m. 700 Lehman Rd. cityofkyle.com.

**CONTINUED:** Teen Chat & Chill, see Fri 6; Summer 2021 Zilker Musical, see Thu 5.

**Sat 14**  
**Kyle Market Days.** Shop for fresh and local goods while enjoying live music. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. The location has been moved to Gregg-Clarke Park, 1100 W. Center St. cityofkyle.com.

**Waterloo Park Reopening COMMUNITY Day.** The community is invited to the Grand Reopening of Waterloo Park for COMMUNITY Day, a family-friendly festival with dozens of activities and live performances. 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Waterloo Park, 500 E. 12th St. FREE. waterloogreenway.org/events.

**Second Saturdays Are for Families: Ice Painting. Drop in and create.** Beat the heat with this cool ice workshop. Reservations are required. Tickets released on the first of every month. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Laguna Gloria, 3809 W. 35th St. FREE. thecontemporaryaustin.org.

**Night Rider Family Bike Ride.** The Eighth Annual Night Rider is a unique and exciting organized GLOW bike ride utilizing the Brushy Creek Regional Trail System. 8:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Rabb House, 106 S. Mays St. \$10-\$15. roundrocktexas.gov.

**CONTINUED:** Baby Bloomers, see Sat 7; Barton Creek Farmers Market, see Sat 7; Summer 2021 Zilker Musical, see Thu 5; Summer Movie Night Series, see Sat 7.



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**Sun 15**  
**CONTINUED:** Buda Farmers Market, see Sun 1.

**Tue 17**  
**CONTINUED:** Storytime and Fitness, see Tue 3.

**Wed 18**  
**Crafty Kids.** Join us for library-led crafting fun for ages 5-10. 4 p.m. Kyle Public Library, 500 Scott St. cityofkyle.com.

**Thu 19**  
**Teen Anime.** Teens ages 12-17. 4:30 p.m. Kyle Public Library, 500 Scott St. cityofkyle.com.

**Fri 20**  
**TGIF Movie With Popcorn.** Join us for a family-friendly, classic movie with popcorn. Bring a drink! 1 to 3:30 p.m. Elgin Public Library, 404 N. Main St. elgintx.com/calendar.

**Family Skate Night.** There will be music, concessions and Kona-ice on-site. Skates will not be provided. Registration is required. 6 to 8:30 p.m. Ash Pavilion. cityofkyle.com.

**Movie Night.** Mobile Loaves & Fishes invites you to watch Godzilla vs. Kong at Community First! Village's Community Cinema and Amphitheater. 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. 9301 Hog Eye Rd. \$5. mlf.org/community-cinema.

**CONTINUED:** Teen Chat & Chill, see Fri 6.

**Sat 21**  
**NYOS Campuswide Celebration.** Families of all ages are invited to enjoy a ribbon-cutting ceremony, outdoor booths and light snacks. 9 to 11 a.m. NYOS Charter School, 12309 N. Lamar Blvd. FREE. nyos.org.

**CONTINUED:** Baby Bloomers, see Sat 7; Barton Creek Farmers Market, see Sat 7; Summer Movie Night Series, see Sat 7.

**Sun 22**  
**CONTINUED:** Buda Farmers Market, see Sun 1.

**Tue 24**  
**CONTINUED:** Storytime and Fitness, see Tue 3.

**Thu 26**  
**Teen Gamers.** Youth ages 12-17 are invited to play games with friends and enjoy free snacks. 4:30 p.m. Kyle Public Library, 500 Scott St. cityofkyle.com.

**Fri 27**  
**Music in the Park.** Bring lawn chairs, pfurry friends, blankets, picnic baskets, friends and neighbors for a free evening of music, entertainment and relaxation. 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Pflugger Park, 515 City Park Rd. FREE. pflugerville.gov.

**CONTINUED:** Teen Chat & Chill, see Fri 6.

**Sat 28**  
**Batfest.** Be part of an annual celebration of Austin's Mexican free-tailed bat population. Enjoy two stages of live music, more than 50 arts and crafts vendors, delicious food and drinks, fun children's activities, a bat costume contest and other bat activities. 4 p.m. to midnight. Congress Avenue Bridge, 100 S. Congress Ave. \$20. roadwayevents.com/event/bat-fest.

**CONTINUED:** Baby Bloomers, see Sat 7; Barton Creek Farmers Market, see Sat 7; Summer Movie Night Series, see Sat 7.

**Sun 29**  
**CONTINUED:** Buda Farmers Market, see Sun 1.

**Tue 31**  
**CONTINUED:** Storytime and Fitness, see Tue 3.

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# Destination Restaurants With Playscapes (and More!)

BY JESS ARCHER

**Fact:** To attract the business of parents with school-aged children, it's best for restaurants to offer on-site fun for kids. And as parents in central Texas head out during the long summer months, they want to know their options. Here are three all-season restaurants in the beautiful hill country that cater to the whole family. These venues offer playscapes, splash pads and much more. Best of all, most of their on-site, kid-friendly entertainment is free.



## Dreamland

[dreamlanddstx.com](http://dreamlanddstx.com)

Dreamland is nestled in beautiful Dripping Springs and promotes itself as "an outdoor entertainment and arts venue." And it really is the full package. You'll want to block out an entire day to experience all that Dreamland has to offer. Sit comfortably in the shade by the playscape and splash pad, both of which are of no cost. Dreamland also boasts the only covered and lighted pickleball courts in central Texas. The whole family can also enjoy their one-of-a-kind miniature golf course. You can walk through the vast grounds and take in the various murals

and art installations, all done by local Dripping Springs artists. Check out their comprehensive website for a variety of weekly events, including live music.



## Frontyard Brewery

[frontyardbrewing.com](http://frontyardbrewing.com)

The Texas hill country landscape is its own reason to take a drive out to Frontyard Brewery in Spicewood. Once there you can be sure the whole family will enjoy the spacious grounds. The brewery features award-winning brews on tap, as well as wines. They even offer a house-made root beer for kids. Two food trucks that cater to families are on-site and offer kids' menus. Enjoy some great popsicles for sale too. Adults and children can roam the nicely landscaped property that includes playscape equipment, slides, a gaga ball pit as well as pickleball courts. There's plenty of room to throw a Frisbee or football. Every weekend, Frontyard features live music by local artists. Bring camping chairs and blankets to sit on the comfortable AstroTurf in the inner courtyard and soak in the sounds of central Texas. For food truck menus and the events calendar, visit the website.



Photo credit John Pacheco.

## Route 12 Filling Station

[route12fillingstation.com](http://route12fillingstation.com)

Whether it really was a gas station at some point or made to look like one, Route 12 Filling Station in Dripping Springs has an old Texas highway charm about it. You'll want to block off plenty of time to sit back and relax while there. Route 12 has a great playground for kids, and even better, a splash pad to keep kids safely occupied. With a great Americana menu, it's a venue that the whole family will appreciate. Locally-owned and -operated, visitors will be sure to feel its warmth and hospitality.

*Jess Archer is a freelance writer in Austin. Find Jess at [writerjessarcher.com](http://writerjessarcher.com).*

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## JUST FOR GRINS

CATE BERRY

*Berry is an Austin-based children's book author and mother of two. She also teaches writing workshops for young people at cateberry.com.*



### Pick Your Weird

In college, my pal, Martha, embarked on six weeks of The Red Diet. She ate only red and white foods, while red lights flashed on her tummy and drumming music blasted through the stereo. We chuckled watching her gobble up sirloin steaks (red meat), vanilla ice cream and Twinkie innards. After six weeks, she wasn't a portrait of health, but who were we to judge?

Oh, the long and checkered past of the alternative diet.

This month marks one year since I gave up flour and sugar entirely. Yes, you read that correctly, and no, that does not include almond flour or any gluten-free products. I'm a purist, for better or worse. Real fruits, veggies, organic meats and legumes are my staples.

The number one question I get is, "Do you feel better?" My dualistic response is a puzzler. Yes, and no. Yes, I enjoy sleeping

better and less joint pain. But no, I do not like constant food planning and feeling the odd duck in social situations. At a recent happy hour, there was no rosé for me (bummer!) but I easily crossed my legs (winner!). See what I mean?

The number two reaction I get is, "I could never give up \_\_\_\_\_" [reader, it's always chocolate]. But the thing is, you could. You could! Look at Martha and her red diet. Sure, she had unlimited mashed potatoes, but she had to give up lemon tarts! (A decidedly yellow food.)

What I'm getting at here is you have to pick your weird. Would you rather feel like a wacko packing canned food for a flight to Philly or a nerd who has to nap every afternoon from eating too many donuts? I choose the former. For now. Weird, right?

But hey, it's Austin. And I'm right on-brand.



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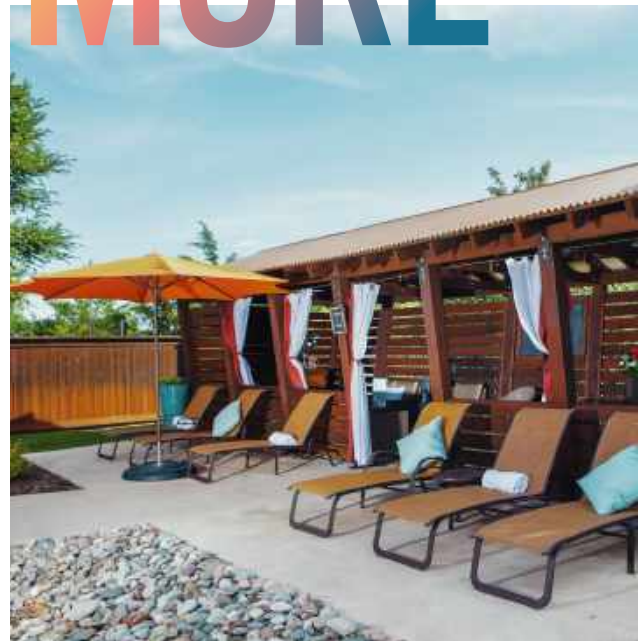
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