



Review your child's activities and avoid overscheduling

Some parents try to schedule every minute of their children's free time in an effort to prepare them for success in later life. But studies suggest that kids benefit from having free time.

When days are packed with lessons, sports and other structured activities, children can become overwhelmed and stressed out. As a result, they don't do as well in school and are more likely to get sick.

To determine if your child might be overscheduled, ask yourself these four questions:

1. Does my child have time to play with friends? Practices that are planned and run by adults don't count. Kids need time to relax and just "hang out" with other kids.
2. When does my child do homework? Does she work on math while traveling from one activity to the next? Schoolwork takes concentration, and that takes time.
3. Why is my child in these activities? Sometimes, parents are the ones who want their child to take a class or participate in a sport.
4. Does my child get enough sleep? Children 6 to 12 years old need between nine and 12 hours of sleep each day. Without that sleep, kids' brains don't function as well.

School is your child's most important job. If too many activities are getting in the way, ask your child to choose only one or two she truly enjoys. She'll be happier and healthier—and she'll do better in school.

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