



Making the Most of the Summer Months: Ideas to Use Your Summer Break to Your Advantage



The summer months can provide a break from the school routine that is rejuvenating and often needed. However, you do not have to stop learning during the summer months, and you can definitely use those weeks to your advantage! The summer can be a time to play catch-up, improve, explore, gain experience, and more. The activities below are certainly not an exhaustive list of ideas for maximizing your summer, but they can provide you with a clearer plan for reaching your goals. The most important thing to note is that there is no single best way to spend your summer. Instead, you should. Any summer activity that you choose should be something that interests you and allows you to develop as a person. The by-product of that will be the opportunity to add meaningful experiences to your resume.

Take Summer School Classes

Summer School opportunities are available for students who wish to catch up academically, improve up their previous academic performance, make room in their schedule for additional courses, or tackle advanced courses without the stress of six or seven other classes. PHS offers limited number of courses onsite during the summer as well as some courses via Indiana Online Academy. You should talk to your counselor about your interests and options regarding summer school.

Get a Part-Time Job or Internship

Obtaining a part-time job or internship can be a great way for you to earn a little extra spending money but most importantly, gain valuable experiences that can help with your college & career planning. The skills you will gain in your job or internship are the same skills that colleges and future employers are looking for: accountability, responsibility, problem solving, working with a team, communication, attention to details, and more. Working at a part-time job or internship is a great way to explore possible career fields!

Volunteer

Time spent serving others in your community can be tremendously rewarding and often provides opportunities to gain experience & skills that you can use in the future. Service experiences will also provide an opportunity for you to list valuable experiences that colleges and employers are looking for – it's another way to help students stand out as they are applying to colleges and jobs. Several local scholarships are also looking for students that give back to their community. Not only will you gain meaningful experiences, it could lead to potential scholarship money!

Research and Visit Colleges and Universities

It can often be difficult to make time to research colleges during the school year when you are balancing academics and extracurricular activities. The summer months can be an ideal time to explore college websites, start creating a list of colleges you want to visit, and also spend time visiting (in person or virtual campus tour). Find the right college is all about finding what is the best fit for the student & family (academic program, size, location, financial fit). Summer is a great time to start working on generating a list but also identifying important factors in selecting a college. The best way to find the right fit is by visiting!

Enroll in a College Summer Program

Many colleges and universities offer summer programs for high school students. These programs can be academic in nature, focus on developing leadership skills, aim to introduce students to a particular career, or provide exposure to college life in general. Some programs are highly competitive, and many have late winter/early spring application deadlines – so it's important to plan ahead so you don't miss any opportunities. Students can find more information about these opportunities by taking to guidance, teachers, visiting the college's website, and through the resources on the back of this brochure.

Research Majors and Careers

While your coursework at school can definitely help you narrow down your interests and identify possible career fields, conducting research about major fields of study and career areas is highly recommended. There are a variety of ways that you can learn more about possible majors and careers during the summer months:

Career Assessments: there are several online resources that allow students to take interest inventories, personality assessments, and skills or value surveys. **Naviance provides two FREE career assessments that will help identify interests and strengths!** These assessments will help you understand more about how your interests, preferences, and strengths fit with career options. Taking career assessments can give you additional ideas about possible careers that could lead to potential job-shadows or internship.

Research Majors and Careers Online: Not every career requires a four-year degree, just like career assessments, many resources exist to help you learn more about college majors and future careers. You can learn about career paths, job descriptions for different career areas, education & training required, salary ranges, and great information like job outlook and demand for specific fields. Doing this kind of research should help you with planning for your post-secondary education.

Job Shadow and/or Conduct Informational Interviews: One of the best ways to learn about different careers is to talk to current professionals. You can do this by interviewing professionals or by asking if you can shadow them for a day to see first-hand what it is like to do that job. One of the best places to start with setting up informational interviews or job shadows is connecting with family, neighbors, or family friends. Students are also encouraged to contact business or organizations directly to see if they all job shadows.

Participate in a Research Project

Many students interested in the sciences take advantage of university or organization sponsored research programs/projects for high school students. Research experience allows you to apply what you have learned in your classes to real world problems, and it could help confirm your interest and/or expose you to new areas of interest. See resources below and/or research which colleges/organizations provide these opportunities.

Prepare for College Entrance Exams

Definitely consider fitting SAT and ACT prep into your summer plans. Summer is a perfect time to schedule at least one, if not multiple, standardized exams. College Board (SAT) and ACT provide FREE, online test preps – Khan Academy (SAT) and ACT Academy (ACT). Both programs can create an individual test prep guide for students based on how they previously performed – including PSAT results for SAT. Stats show students have higher success rates on either exam if they take advantage of test prep programs.

Resources for Finding Summer Opportunities

- Extensive database of college summer programs/camps: <https://www.teenlife.com/category/summer/>
- Summer Internship Opportunities: www.indianaintern.net; www.internships.com
- Volunteer Opportunities: www.helpindyonline.com; www.volunteermatch.org; and www.uwci.org/volunteer
- Your Naviance Student Account provides career assessments, additional options include: www.indianacareerexplorer.com, www.learnmoreindiana.org, www.16personalities.com
- Your Naviance Student Account provides college search engines through the SuperMatch tool, other options include: www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org, www.cappex.com, www.collegemajors101.com