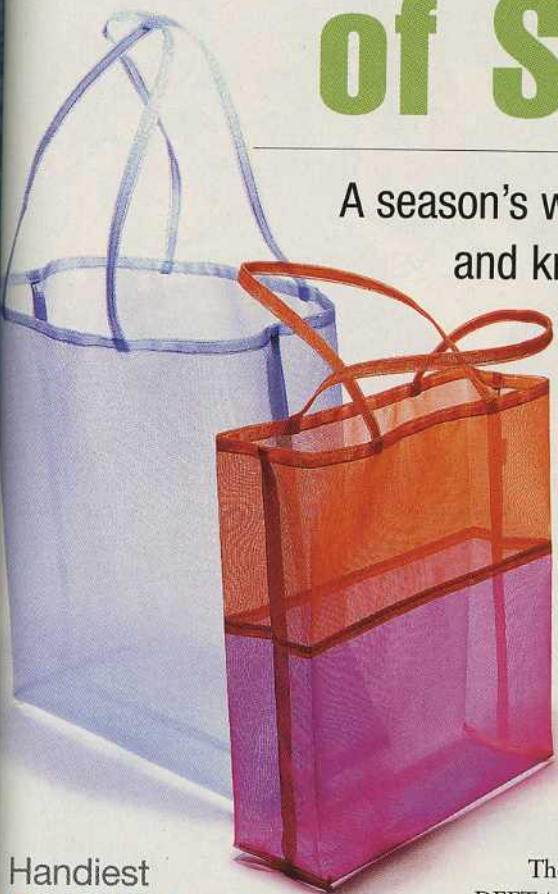


The Best of Summer

A season's worth of things to do, see, and know **BY DINA ROTH**



Handiest Beach Tote

Lightweight bags are great for carrying sunglasses, sunscreen, and other essentials to the shore. Look for mesh, which means fewer sand-trap surprises when you get home. (Walker nylon totes, \$30 to \$37. For more information, go to www.walkerbags.com.)

Speediest Sand Remover

Once you leave the beach, sprinkle baby powder on your child's sand-covered body. Then brush off the powder—the sand comes off with it.

Most Effective Bug Repellent

The best insect repellents have DEET (diethyl-meta-toluamide)—but for kids, choose those with no more than ten percent of this powerful compound (check the label). It'll keep bugs at bay for about four hours. Creams or oil-based formulas last longer than sprays and are easier to apply to the face and neck. A new DEET-free option: Avon Skin-So-Soft Bug Guard

Plus also comes in a sunscreen version and works for up to three hours (\$12 for four ounces; www.avon.com).

Most Protective Shades

What to choose:

- ▶ Polycarbonate and polarized lenses
- ▶ 90 to 100 percent UV protection
- ▶ Flexible frames

(Stride Rite, \$9 to \$11. For more information, contact the Vision Council of America at www.checkyearly.com.) »





Yummiest New Ice Cream Flavor

Get your cones out! July 21 is National Ice Cream Day. Scoop up Ben & Jerry's new S'mores—chocolate ice cream with marshmallow swirls and fudge-covered graham crackers. Even more reason to eat up: A portion of the proceeds will go to KaBOOM!, a national nonprofit organization that helps communities build safe playgrounds for children. (\$3.49 a pint. For more information, go to www.benjerry.com.)

Smartest Chocolate Ice Cream Stain Remover

It's inevitable. No sooner does your kid say "Double scoop with sprinkles" than his shirt gets splattered. Chocolate can be a toughie, but this step-by-step approach will do the trick:

Most Quotable Quote

"Summer afternoon—to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language." —HENRY JAMES

1. Before the stain has a chance to set, dampen it with water. Mix one teaspoon of liquid laundry detergent with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup each white distilled vinegar and water. Using a cloth, gently dab—don't rub—the mixture onto the spot. Rinse with water. If stain comes out, launder as usual. If not, read on...
2. Rinse area with cool water, then pour a few drops of hydrogen peroxide and clear ammonia on it. Let it sit for five minutes; wash.
3. Stain's still there? Wash it one more time using a bleach sodium perborate (such as Clorox 2 or Snowy Bleach).

Savviest Memory Saver

Your baby's debut dip in the pool. Her first taste of ice cream. Capture all of summer's cutest moments with a rough-and-tumble camera you can toss in a beach bag. Fujicolor's QuickSnap Waterproof 35mm camera is durable and disposable and works in up to 17 feet of water. (\$14.95 for a 27-exposure camera. For more information, call 800-800-3854 or go to www.fujifilm.com.)

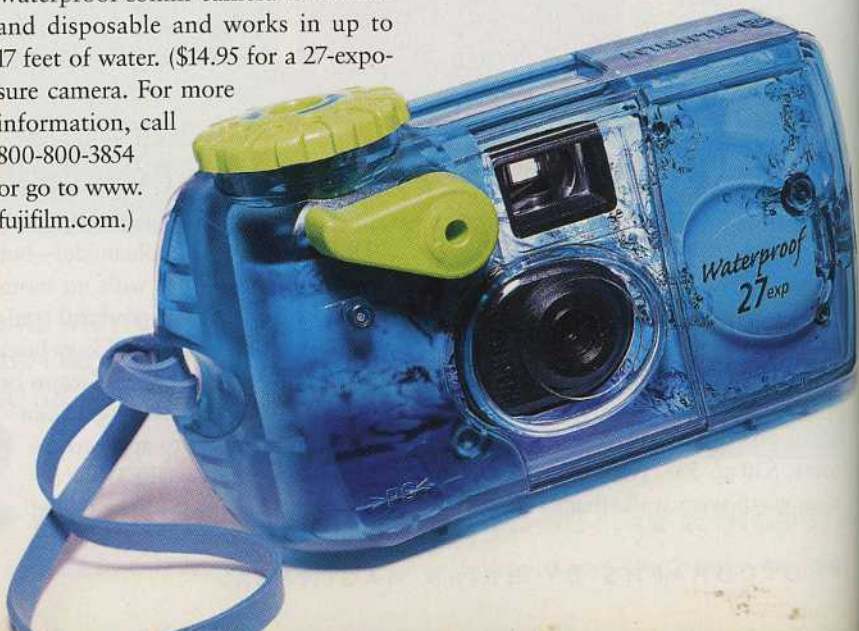


Shadiest Sun Hat

For the greatest coverage, look for:

- ▶ A three- to six-inch-wide brim
- ▶ Neck panels
- ▶ A snug but comfortable fit.

Nice extras: a bright color and a quirky design or pattern that will especially appeal to your child. (Flap Happy hat, \$12. For more information, call 800-234-3527.) »



Niftiest Way to Haul Stuff to the Beach

Lug the kids, blankets and towels, snacks, water bottles, toys, and more with Little Tikes's Explorer wagon. It rolls smoothly over any terrain and folds up easily to fit inside the car. (\$60 to \$70; for 1½ years and up. For more information, go to www.littletikes.com.)



► Avoid being outside—or at least go for the shade—during the hottest part of the day, typically between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M.

► Serve small meals frequently and cut back on high-protein foods, which increase metabolic heat.

Cleverest Sand Castle Secrets

Winning strategies from Teagan Von Seggern, 13, a cwinner of the 2001 Kids 'n Kastles contest, in Imperial Beach, CA. "First, wet the sand so it will stick, then pack it down into the shape you want. Make the main part of the sand castle, then add the details. To create windows: Use a butter knife to cut a little square into the tower, then use your finger to pull out the sand. Also, try using gardening tools like small rakes, hoes, and shovels to make the tops of towers straight and the walls nice and smooth."



Most Timeless Outdoor Game

Ever since the days of the early Roman Empire, kids have been crazy about hopscotch. All you need is chalk, a small stone, and a little hop, skip, and a jump.

PARENTING.COM

For complete hopscotch rules,

go to www.parenting.com/magazines/ from May 21 to July 8.

Neatest Trick for Applying Sunscreen

Pour sunscreen into a small squeeze bottle, then write your child's name or draw bracelets or a funny face on his body. Then just rub in.

Simplest Ways to Beat the Heat

► Treat kids to ice pops, grapes, and watermelon—all are packed with water. (Offer plenty of plain old H₂O to avoid too much sugar.)

► Spritz your child with cold water or have her take a dip in the pool or run under a sprinkler (like this sunflower one, \$6, from Target); as the water evaporates, her skin temperature will drop.

► Opt for lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothing in natural fibers like cotton.



Coollest Kiddie Cup

Chill out with the Playtex Insulator, a nine-ounce spillproof cup designed to keep your drinks cold for hours. Pack it for your little one's next picnic or trip to the beach (\$3.79 to \$4.69).



Most Entertaining Sky Shows

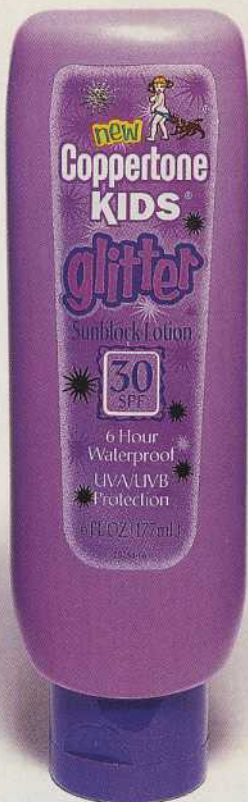
June 10: Check out the annular (ring-like) eclipse of the sun, visible in most of the U.S. Remember the old advice about not looking directly at the sun—UV rays can damage eyes. Instead, stand with your back to the sun and watch the eclipse in a mirror. It will begin around 5 P.M. PST (around sunset on the East Coast) and last for about two hours. >>

July 28–29 and August

12: Watch for meteor showers. You can see them across the country once darkness falls.

Most Shielding Sunblock

The essential elements: UVA and UVB block, an SPF 30, and a formula that's both waterproof and sweatproof. A fun extra—a cool color or sparkles. Two to try: Coppertone Kids Glitter Sunblock Lotion (right) or Hawaiian Tropic Barbie Sunblock in Burstin' Berry scent. Regardless of which sunscreen you choose—or how high the SPF—it must be reapplied every two hours.



Surest Way to Catch a Firefly

Tips for the kindest way to catch one of these magical insects:

When: June, July, and early August, about 15 minutes after sunset.

Where: Open woodland with short grass, meadows, lawns, parks, or marsh—or anywhere the ground is damp.

How: Flick a small flashlight on and off. Male fireflies flash their lights to alert females to their presence, so they'll mistake your light for a mating call. When they move toward you, use your hands or a butterfly net to catch the critters, which tend to fly slowly. If you like, put them in a covered jar with a small piece of apple or a handful of damp grass to maintain humidity. (Just don't poke holes in the jar lid; it'll dry out the air.) Since fireflies live only about a week, you should let them go the next morning to give them a chance to mate.

Splashiest Summer Toy

Firefighters are the most popular superheroes these days, so the Fire Hose Hero by Discovery Toys is sure to keep your little ones happy and cool. (\$20. For more information, call 800-426-4777.)



Easiest-On Water Shoes

Clever toggle laces and sturdy but flexible soles make Lands' End water shoes a cinch to slip onto wet feet. (\$20. For more information, call 800-734-5437 or go to www.landsend.com/kids.) ■

DINA ROTH is an associate editor at PARENTING.

Most Refreshing Lemonade

Nothing satisfies parched palates better on a hot day than this summertime favorite. It's easier than you might think to concoct it from scratch. This recipe makes a quart:

- ▶ Cut 4 lemons in half and remove the pits; squeeze the juice into a pitcher.
- ▶ Stir in 8 tablespoons sugar.
- ▶ Add 4 cups water and 1 to 2 cups ice cubes.
- ▶ Stir well.
- ▶ Serve in four 8-ounce glasses with a thin slice of lemon floating on the top.

