

The simple pleasures of piecing a summer holiday together at home

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

1. What was the best holiday you have ever had? What made it so good?
2. How about the worst? Why was it such a negative experience?
3. What do you think makes a great summer holiday?

2 Key words

a. Match the definitions on the left column to the words on the right. Then, find and highlight them in the text to see them in context.

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. an ice cream on a stick | |
| 2. a long, flexible tube, usually made of plastic or rubber, that is used to move water | a. bingeing |
| 3. jump up and down | b. bounce |
| 4. wet or smooth so it is difficult to stand on without sliding | c. endless |
| 5. describes a time when you don't have much money | d. hose |
| 6. cheap | e. ice-lolly |
| 7. extremely nervous | f. inexpensive |
| 8. having or seeming to have no limit | g. lap |
| 9. watching many episodes non-stop | h. lean |
| 10. the top surface of the legs of someone who is sitting down | i. panicked |
| | j. slippery |

b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. There were no desks or tables, so I had to keep my computer on my _____ during the meeting.
2. The hotel room was _____, but the breakfast was surprisingly good.
3. I was _____ and didn't know what to do! It was horrible.
4. I _____ the entire first season of Game of Thrones in one night. I just couldn't stop!
5. The traffic queue seemed _____. It took me two hours to get home from work.

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Nova Weetman

25 December, 2023

- 1 As a kid, our long summer holidays were spent at the pool, eating white-bread sandwiches, wedges of watermelon and afternoon ice-lollies from the canteen. The concrete was already hot by the time we arrived so Mum would lay out striped towels for us to leave our stuff on. Then we were straight into the water where we would stay until we grew hungry.
- 2 We always holidayed at home in January. My parents preferred to go away in September, driving up north where it was warm. But for those long days after Christmas and before school started, there were the visits to the pool. Sometimes we'd go to the cinema, visit the library in town or make biscuits. Friends might come over and we'd attach the hose to the trampoline in the back garden and bounce for hours on the slippery material.
- 3 Except for the trampoline, my summer holidays haven't actually changed much. I work freelance, and January is usually the leanest month of my year, which means that even if I do have weeks off, I don't have the money to do very much at all.
- 4 Some years we go camping with other families, which is an inexpensive way to swim in the sea and wake up surrounded by trees. But some years, I leave it too late to organise anything and find myself in mid-December without a single plan. I used to be panicked by this, but now I have learned to enjoy my city in the weeks where most people leave. The streets are empty, businesses shut down, and there is an entire lane at the swimming pool just for me.
- 5 When my kids were little, holidaying at home was often easier than organising nap times and car trips. And so we would spend hours playing endless games of hide and seek and making potions in the garden, using up every spice in the house. As the kids grew, they were happy to spend days by the pool, arriving late afternoon and eating a picnic dinner of boiled eggs and raw carrots before going to bed. Now, as teenagers, they enjoy spending their long summer break at home, just lying in bed watching television or hanging out with friends.
- 6 Without the structure of school or work, January is a month of lost time. Days fill with the reading of a book, bingeing a new TV series, or perhaps cleaning cupboards I never usually get around to. While friends spend weeks at the beach, posting photos that sometimes make me jealous, we stay up late, sleep in, and catch up with friends who are also in town.
- 7 After the pandemic, we were all desperate to leave our houses, our towns, our countries. But that feeling is now gone, and I'm enjoying the thought of pottering again. I can start work on a project that may never make money or just catch up with a friend who I never have time to see. But my favourite thing to do if I'm holidaying at home is to buy a jigsaw puzzle of a farm or a far-off land. At home, I'll clear the dining table, accept that our meals will be eaten on our laps on the couch for the next few weeks, and open the box of pieces, making a start on the edge. There I'll sit for hours, refilling my cup of tea, the cat circling my feet, as I work my way through the scene and forget time.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Choose the correct option to complete the sentences about the article.

1. The writer's family used to travel north in September because the weather was **colder / warmer / better** there.
2. They would **drive north / stay home / travel abroad** every year between Christmas and the beginning of the school year.
3. The author explains she usually has **very little money / a lot of money / important work to do** in January.
4. The writer sometimes goes **to the swimming pool / camping / on car trips** because it is a cheaper option.
5. The author's children still enjoy their holidays at home despite **being teenagers / not having friends in town / not having proper meals**.
6. Sometimes the author feels **sorry for / happy for / jealous of** friends who get to go away for their holidays.

4 Key language

a. Complete the sentences below using *used to* and *would*.

1. The concrete was already hot by the time we arrived so Mum _____ lay out striped towels for us to leave our stuff on.
2. Sometimes we _____ go to the cinema, visit the library in town or make biscuits.
3. Friends might come over and we _____ attach the hose to the trampoline in the back garden and bounce for hours on the slippery material.
4. I _____ be panicked by this, but now I have learned to enjoy my city in the weeks where most people leave.
5. And so we _____ spend hours playing endless games of hide and seek and making potions in the garden, using up every spice in the house.

b. Answer the questions below.

1. Do these sentences refer to the past, present, or future?
2. Which auxiliary can you use to describe general information or a state that is no longer true?
3. Which auxiliary can you use to describe a habit or repetitive action in the past?

c. Write four personalised sentences using *used to* or *would* to talk about general information or habits in the past.

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “I have learned to enjoy my city in the weeks where most of its occupants leave.”
- “After the lockdowns of the pandemic, we were all desperate to leave, to flee our houses, towns, or our countries.”
- “My favourite thing to do if I’m holidaying at home is binge-watching TV shows on my computer while cuddling in my bed or sofa.”

6 In your own words

a. What is your ideal holiday? Work in pairs or small groups to plan and budget your ideal holiday. Consider the following:

- destination: at home or travelling
- budget
- transport
- accommodations
- tours / attractions / activities
- food/restaurants
- shopping / souvenirs / extra expenses