



**MY WORD**  
WITH RODNEY MARTIN

# Vacation



Latin *vacare* 'to be empty or free, unoccupied' had another form, *vacatum*. Old French changed this to *vacation*, which Chaucer borrowed as *vacacioun* in 'Canterbury Tales' c.1395 'being free from work, at leisure'. In North America, *vacation* has the same sense as holiday.

Related words: *avoid, vacant, vacuous, vacuum, void*

**T**he main holiday or vacation periods are when schools are vacant and students are free, unoccupied and at leisure. For parents, these periods can often have the opposite effect.

"What are we going to do with the kids during the holidays?"

A vacation is a potential source of new activities for kids, so their heads will not be empty or unoccupied. And vacations do not have to literally mean 'vacating the house'.

Try initiating a leisure interest that will occupy your kids for some time. For example, depending on their age, try constructing a model plane, a Chinese kite, a fish aquarium, a vegetable garden, a wild bird feeder or

anything that takes some research, construction, patience and ongoing care, observation or use.

Researching activities in books, online or at stores with kids involves them in discussion, idea generation, problem solving, reading and physical activity. In other words, you have a learning environment happening at home. You will be amazed at how expert children become in any topic of interest.

Of course, if a vacation does involve vacating home for another environment, that in itself is a learning activity for children with new places to explore.

Learning doesn't stop just because the official learning institution has been vacated. And by involving yourself in a project with your kids, you will learn more about them. Parents are usually the most powerful influencers of their children.

Nature abhors a vacuum, so avoid leaving their minds unoccupied. Fill them with positive memories of times with you. ●

*Rodney Martin is a children's author and educator. His SA family business, Era Publications, creates interactive online children's books for homes, schools and public libraries around the world. <https://erapublications.com/>*

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EP

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