

a midsummer



night's fun

Summer evenings are a lot like desserts: sweet endings that everyone wants more of. ✨ There's no homework, no early bedtimes, just that long after-dinner pause that encourages unhurried together time. ✨ In honor of these fleeting hours, we've put together a collection of crafts, games, and snacks that invite your family to get outside and revel in the twilight.

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✨ To make these flashlight torches, turn to page 121.

★ GLOW-IN-THE-DARK TOY

swinging comet tails

Comet sightings are rare, but this homemade toy will make them regular events in your neighborhood. Kids can have tossing contests, play games of nighttime catch, or just spin the ball to make trails in the evening sky. When the glowing paint starts to fade, simply recharge it under a lamp or flashlight.

You will need:

Tennis ball
Glow-in-the-dark fabric paint
Craft knife
Glow-in-the-dark plastic string
(available at craft stores)
Tacky glue

★ Decorate the ball with the fabric paint. Let it dry under a light or in a sunny spot to charge the paint (we set ours on a bottle cap so it wouldn't roll). ★ Use a craft knife to cut a half-inch-long slit in the painted ball (a parent's job). ★ Form a looped handle by folding a 30-inch length of string in half, then double-knotting the ends together. ★ Squeeze the ball to open the slit, and push the knot into the hole. Add a dab of tacky glue to the slit to secure the string.

★ GROUP GAME

capture the moon

In this twist on flashlight tag, players imagine that their backyard is the night sky and a soccer ball is the full moon. The mission: be the first person to get to the moon. Save this game for after the sun goes down — the darker, the better.

You will need:

4 or more players
Soccer ball
Flashlight

★ In an open area, one player, the Astronaut, stands with a flashlight near the soccer ball moon. ★ He yells, "Blast off!" then closes his eyes and starts to count while the others run and hide. ★ When he reaches 29 — the number of days in a lunar cycle — the Astronaut calls out, "Full moon." Players then try to grab the ball without being caught in the flashlight's beam. ★ To make things more interesting, have the Astronaut turn off the light between tags to sneak up on players. ★ When a player is caught in the light, he's out. ★ The first person to pick up the ball or the last player left to be tagged is the new Astronaut.



★ CUSTOMIZED CLOTHES

night sky tees

These glow-in-the-dark T-shirts may be the ultimate evening wear. Although they require some daytime preparation, they make a fashion statement long after the sun goes down.

You will need:

- Black or navy blue T-shirt, pre-washed
- Con-Tact paper
- Cardboard
- Fabric paint (we used white and silver glitter)
- Foam paintbrushes
- Glow-in-the-dark paint (we used white, orange, and green)
- Cotton swabs

★ On the Con-Tact paper, trace a round plate for a planet or draw a waning moon and stars. ★ Cut

the shapes from the paper to create a stencil, then peel off the backing and press the stencil onto the shirt. ★ Insert a piece of cardboard between the shirt layers to keep the paint from bleeding through. ★ Use a paintbrush to fill in the shapes with fabric paint (we used white for the planet and moon, silver glitter for the stars). ★ After the paint dries, add a layer of glow-in-the-dark paint (we used orange for the planet, white for the rest). ★ When that paint is dry, peel off the stencil. ★ Add green glow-in-the-dark rings to the planet. ★ For small stars, use a cotton swab to dab glitter-paint dots onto the shirt. ★ Follow the fabric paint instructions for setting the design and washing your shirt.

★ NATURE CRAFT

cricket chirper

Nothing says summer evenings like the call of serenading crickets. That distinctive song is actually the sound of crickets rubbing their wings together — a technique called stridulation. With a few wooden beads glued to two skewers, you can chime in with the chirping choir.

★ Use scissors to cut the pointed tips from two 10-inch wooden skewers. ★ Thread fifteen ½-inch beads tightly together onto each one and use tacky glue to secure the end beads to the skewers. ★ When the glue is dry, play your instrument by rubbing the beaded sections against each other.



★ CAMPFIRE DESSERT

s'more roll-ups

Turn gooey s'mores into a tidy treat with this campfire or cookout dessert. The sweet, kid-favorite flavors aren't lost in this translation — just the sticky fingers!

You will need:
 Chocolate chips
 Mini marshmallows
 8-inch flour tortillas
 Aluminum foil

★ For each one, spoon two tablespoons of chocolate chips and a dozen miniature marshmallows into the center of a flour tortilla. ★ Roll up the tortilla, wrap it in foil, and set it on campfire coals for about 4 minutes or on a hot grill for about 8 minutes, flipping it halfway through. Use tongs to remove it from the heat.
 ★ When the foil is cool enough to hold, fold it down on one end. Be sure the filling is cool enough to eat before serving.



Not Your Average Flashlights

★ Light up your summer evenings with one of these fun lights



Black Diamond Wiz Headlamp: Available in two colors, this lamp sits comfortably on a kid's forehead for hands-free play. Switch it on for a steady light or click the button twice for the strobe mode. (\$18; bdel.com; two AA batteries required)

Animal LED Lights: With a little squeezing, these critters shine on and on and on (no batteries required!). Pumping the side trigger for 30 seconds powers the light for 12 minutes, and an on-off button



on the side lets you store power for later use. Available in a pig, cow, or frog shape. (\$9; perpetualkid.com)

Super Dynamo Flashlight: This battery-free pump light has a transparent shell so kids can watch the inner workings as they generate electricity.



When the light goes off (after about one minute), reactivate it by squeezing the trigger. (\$15 assembled, \$11 build-it-yourself kit; innovatoy.com)

Finger Flashlights: Let your fingers do the lighting with these spaceship-shaped miniature flashlights. Wrap the elastic bands around your fingers, and you're ready to create colorful swirls. The batteries are included and not replaceable, but they'll last for days. (\$10 for a set of 8 in different colors; hearthsong.com)



Writer Joanna Nesbit and her family celebrate summer evenings in their Bellingham, Washington, backyard.