

“School’s ... out ... for ... summer!”

Sure, there are no more pencils, no more books, no more teachers’ dirty looks. But there is also a huge gap in hanging out with your friends!

Yep, admit it. One of the best perks of going to school is being with your friends. No school equals less time with friends. What can you do to deal with withdrawal pain?

No. 1: Stay connected online! Of course, you want to be sure it’s safe, which is why we created Yoursphere.com for kids and teens. You get all the benefits of social networking – like profiles, blogs and photo galleries – without worrying about unwanted attention from people you don’t know.

How is Yoursphere.com different from other sites like MySpace and Facebook? First on the list: security. There are some security settings on other social networks, but on Yoursphere, your security is automatically set at the highest level. You choose who can see your profile and who you interact with online.

Next way that Yoursphere helps you stay connected: Spheres. These are groups... clubs... circles... places to hang out. You see, a sphere is what we call a social hub, a web page that you create and your friends can join. We have sphere categories for music, art and photography, sports, movies and TV, and even academics. Want to hang out with other kids from choir or drama? Create your own sphere! Share memories of trips and competitions or the end-of-school lock-in by writing posts and uploading pictures.

Yoursphere rewards you just for being a member! You can earn credits just for posting, chatting, or joining spheres. Rack up the credits turn them in for an iPod, iPhone, movie tickets, a shopping spree, or games like Guitar Hero.

So how else can you stay connected with your friends?

No. 2: Make a date! Staying close to your friends doesn’t happen by accident. It takes planning. Make sure you have everyone’s cell number and plan to get together at least once a month. Maybe meet at your house for DVD movie night or visit the neighborhood pool.

(Be sure to check with your parents. They’re more likely to give you a thumb-up if you include them as you make your plans.)

No. 3: Make a resolution to learn something you didn’t already know about kids you know from school. Each of us is more than just what we show off in school, so make a special effort to see what else makes them tick! See what they’re doing over the summer that’s different from what they do at school. Do they play baseball or go to dance camp or write short stories or do amazing editing of photographs? Don’t forget to share something new about yourself.

By the way, Yoursphere.com is a great place to learn more about your friends. When you add someone to your circle of friends, you’ll see a list of their activities on your home page. You’ll see when they upload a picture or write a new blog post. Cool, huh?

So, don't let summer turn into a bore. Stay connected to your friends by linking up on a secure web site, making dates to see friends, and resolving to learn something new about your school mates. When school starts up again in September, you'll be even closer to your friends and the pencils, books and teacher's dirty look won't be so dreadful!