

It's Cookie Time!

It's that time of year again – my daughter will be one of thousands of girls selling the yumily famous Girl Scout cookies. I'm not selling them online, but rather using my blog to post info you may need to help you decide how many boxes of what kinds you'd like to order. [Click here to meet the cookies](#). If you'd like to support the wonderful cause of Girl Scouts and get some delicious snacks at the same time, just let me know how many boxes of which flavor you'd like – they're \$3 per box. Thanks for your support!

Where's My Happy Little Guy?

My son (after having only daughters for the past nine years, it seems weird to say the word son) must be teething. He will be 6 months old on Sunday already, and for the last 5 days, he's been crying constantly. Yesterday was the exception, but 4 of the 5 last days, he's been crying nonstop – it's quite taxing for both of us. Mostly, the exhaustion comes because I just feel badly for the little guy – he used to be the happiest baby and smiled constantly. But after trying everything to cheer him up, sometimes I selfishly think about how hard it is on me as well. I can't imagine the pain he's going through, but in the mean time, I can't get anything done around the house – and leisure time? Forget it. It's hard to get anything done while holding him, and holding him offers one of the only ways to keep him from crying – sometimes even holding him doesn't work. Sometimes there is no choice but to put him down somewhere, like when I'm cooking for instance, and he's not happy anywhere right now... not in his playpen, his bouncer, his bouncy seat, his crib, the floor, nowhere,

which means he is screaming, and it's a draining form of torture to hear a baby cry all day. The only reason I'm actually able to sit down and write this blog (YES! Leisure time after all!) right now is because he is passed out (after a crying spell) sitting on the couch next to me. He sometimes likes it there too, but that means I'm glued to the couch – can't leave a baby unattended on a couch of course. So I can sit here and type this blog, but I can't do things like tackle my accumulating clutter or begin the task of cutting Mt. Washmore down to size. Mt. Washmore is the never-ending, magically replenishing pile of laundry often found lurking in households with 2 or more kids – I have 4 kids, so our Mt. Washmore is taking on a life of its own. If we have any more kids, I'm afraid people who come to visit us will just arrive at the foot of a gi-normous pile of clothes where there once was a house and a family who lived inside.

I try to tell myself that things like backed-up laundry and clutter don't really matter in the long run. Heck, I'll probably even be bored and WISH I had lots more laundry to do once my kids are all grown and in school during the day. But just as I convince my brain that this is true, my feet stumble over something that's in the way and shouldn't be there – clutter or a basket of laundry to put away. Speak of the devil, the laundry buzzer just went off... if only my son will sleep through the transfer from the couch to his playpen so I can go fold it and put it away, thereby avoiding feeding Mt. Washmore.

HE DID! He's asleep in his playpen! But now the dogs are barking at the neighbor's cat again and WAAAAA, WAAAAAA!!! Those dogs have woken the baby again! Sigh...

I guess today will see yet another expansion of Mt. Washmore after all.

More Cuties

No, I'm not talking about the oranges called Cuties.



Have you heard of those? They're small oranges especially grown to be kid-friendly: less sour taste, seedless, and easier to peel and smaller than regular oranges. I've been wanting to try them for our family, but when I finally remembered to pick them up at Walmart, the bag I had hastily grabbed contained smashed and rotten fruit. What else is new – our Walmart always carries terrible produce. But this is not going to be a Walmart-bashing post. Tangents aside, I posted pictures of our new pet rat cuties in my previous post, so here are pictures of our real cuties. Here is our one little guy with his 3 older sisters:



And below are the oldest and the youngest kids in our family – they're 8.5 years apart. I wish I had blocked the sun before I took this picture!



Who Needs Pockets?

Given my fear of frogs, no matter how illogical it is, this video terrified me to the very core. I couldn't even watch the whole thing, and what I did see was watched with my feet picked up off the floor – just too creepy. But I still hope none of the buggers were injured in the filming of this video from youtube called “Who Needs Pockets?”

KidsSpeak

Kids say the darndest things, as we all know – they even made a tv show about it. Here is a list of some of the cute mispronunciations my kids have made and their ages when they said them.

“ah-cro-poose” said by Sammie, age 3. Translation: octopus

“Taylor lelled at me” said by Sammie, age 4. Translation: lelled = yelled

“Beeber” said by Disney, age 2. Translation: Christopher (her baby brother). This has actually led to Christopher having nicknames of Beeber and Beebs.

“Kipper” said by Disney, age 2. Translation: Christopher. She moved out of the Beeber phase and now calls him Kipper.

“may-sa-peer” said by Sammie, age 3. Translation: disappear

“tormado” said by Sammie, age 4. Translation: tornado. Look closely at how I typed the word – she replaces the “n” with an “m” sound.

“ith ith” said by Taylor, age 1. Translation: kitty.

“diaper call off!” said by Disney, age 2. Translation: Help! My diaper is falling off!

“gggg” said by Christopher, age 5 months. Translation: various. I just wanted to put his sounds in this list too.

Clap, Clap, Slap The Chest...

What IS this? It's something that is popular among tween girls lately. They walk around doing some kind of ritual that involves clapping and slapping their chests, among other things. I didn't really think much of it, until my daughter's 9th birthday party, and there were other kids here doing it. When my 2-year-old picked it up, it became annoying and I decided to take action by writing a blog post and looking it up on the internet. I asked my daughter if it's from a movie or a tv show or something, but she didn't seem to know where it came from. When I tried to look it up on the internet, I just got instructions for other games of this type and didn't see anything about any sort of fad that's sweeping our tweens. So is anyone reading this whose kids do the same thing, or is this a NW Ohio thing? I'd like to know where it came from so I can decide if it's a behavior I want all of my kids duplicating.

Toy Culling

A few weeks ago, our kids were chronically misbehaving. Our oldest, a tween, was sassing back and saying "no" too much, her younger sister (the "spirited" one) was throwing lots of tantrums and trying to cause trouble with her sisters, and our youngest daughter was constantly upset and insecure about the continuous chaos in the house. Desperate times call for desperate measures, so one day while the oldest kids were at school and the younger ones were sleeping, my husband took off work for an afternoon of "toy culling". This is a drastic discipline measure we only use in emergency situations. It is time-consuming and intensive labor for the parents, but well

worth it, at least in our house.

Toy culling consists of us going into the girls' room (the three oldest girls share one big room, and our baby boy isn't yet old enough to cause trouble) and taking out every toy. We leave the tv, computer with educational games, books, and the clothes and board games in the closet. Everything else goes – dressup clothes, doll clothes, dolls, stuffed animals, all the little miscellaneous toys that can really junk up a child's room quickly, etc. If you have lots of time, you can sort it all by what you want to keep and organize the rest, but we are very busy people and so we just took all their junk and put it in our son's room for now. He's a baby who wakes in the night so he's still in our room. When it's time to move him into his room, we'll have to clean it out obviously, but for now it was a means to an end of the horrible behavior of the girls. We leave the board games, and they know that they take one out and put it away when they're done, just like the books that are left. If the rules aren't followed, anything that's left on the floor in subsequent days gets culled. You need to check their room everyday, and it's **imperitive** that you follow through with rule-enforcing. And for some reason, this process really works. I don't know what it is... Perhaps a feng shui effect where the much more pleasant ambience of the room and the *mucho* extra space is what leads to the kids being in better moods and hence, less trouble and more obedient. It could be the fact that there are less toys over which to fight. Maybe they're happier not having it constantly hanging over their heads that they're going to have to clean their room. But I don't care what the reason is, the toy culling has worked wonderfully the 3-5 times we've had to set aside a chunk of time to do it. My kids are now putting their dirty laundry in the hampers that are provided, and their trash is going into garbage cans. Also, their room is staying clean, and I don't have to worry about it staying that way because they don't have anything with which to mess it up! And, as the behavior improves, they can earn their toys back – you

don't have to spend money to get them any special reward PLUS the kids feel senses of accomplishment = WIN/WIN. Toy culling proves that less is more, and it helps put a damper on the sense of entitlement that can cloud the good attitude of even a generally well-behaved child.

I think I first read about the method in a parenting column in the newspaper. I'm not sure which expert gets the credit, but I do know that I highly recommend toy culling! And oh yes, early December is a perfect time to do this – makes room for the burst of new things they might receive for the holidays!

Road Kill Etiquette?

Saturday morning started off completely crazily of course – it was the morning of our oldest daughter's ninth birthday party. We were running around like lunatics, trying to take care of our own 4 kids and getting last minute details for the party worked out – we didn't even know how many kids were going to show up since people refuse to RSVP, but that's a separate post altogether. I had invited 25 kids – I know that sounds completely crazy, but my daughter's school has a rule that you have to invite the entire class if you're handing invitations out at school (understandable, don't want any kids' feelings hurt) – so with the 17 in her class + Brownies + outside of school friends = meant almost 30 eight and nine-year-olds could have shown up at my house on Saturday. But thank goodness, only about 6 or 7 showed up (they never stood still long enough for me to count them), which is another reason why I invite every kid my daughter knows – if we had only invited 5 kids, none of them would have been able to come probably.

So Saturday morning was hectic, to say the least. Various kids were melting down in anticipation of the party, and adults were scrambling to decorate and plan games for somewhere between 5 and 25 kids. My husband is brilliant and came up with an idea to do a craft, and luckily we have a pretty big supply of craft items. So we threw a bunch of stuff together, and the kids made Christmas ornaments out of small red plastic cups and whatever else we found and had an awesome time doing so. I was feeling much better after the craft idea was hatched, because it was almost time for kids to arrive and now everything was ready. My dog started barking, so I went to the window to see what the barking was about this time. Just as I got to the window, a squirrel ran out in front of a car and got hit – right in front of my house and my eyes – ugh. What an awful way to start a birthday party – I'm really sensitive about those kind of things. I wanted my husband to go out and move it – it was right in front of our house – but he refused. I can't say I blame him, I wasn't going to go near it for anything, and I made him tie the party balloons out front. But I knew at the very least, kids (especially boys) would be talking about the dead squirrel for the entire party. At least it wasn't warm out, which would have increased the chances of the party spilling outside, further leading to more attention on the poor unlucky squirrel. So I don't know, what's road kill / birthday party etiquette? Should we have removed the squirrel? Never had to deal with THAT problem before. And I hope I never have to again; it cast a terrible shadow over my day. But as it happened, no need to worry about the squirrel – by party time he was flat as a pancake and no one noticed him. By the end of the party, he had disappeared completely. I'm just glad none of my kids had to see it happen; I think that would have been rough on them. And I'm happy to report that the birthday party was a HUGE success with several kids exclaiming that it was the best birthday party they had ever been to... of course one of those comments came from a kid who was at his first birthday party ever. But we did catch one kid lying

about calling her grandma to come pick her up. She said grandma wasn't home but it turns out that she had never dialed – I'm glad I'm well-informed of that trick now. This same kid's grandma didn't show up last year until an hour after the party was over, hmmm... As President George W. Bush would say – Fool me once, shame on... fool me twice... if you get fooled, you'll be fooled again.

Happy 9th Birthday Taylor!

Indiana Jones-ette

Remember that CNN.com article I wrote about the unusual names? The article spotlighted a little girl named Indiana Elizabeth Jones and her brother, Dow. Well, this post is not going to be about them.

Rather, it's an excuse to post a cute photo of my 4-year-old daughter wearing an Indiana Jones-like costume. For the real buffs out there, I know it's not exact, but it's still cute...



Technology And Santa

Due to the many technological advances that have been made in the world since we were kids, I think today's youth have somewhat of a different perspective on Santa.

First of all, on Christmas Eve, they can track Santa's travels on the internet. When we were young, it was "get to bed, and if you're not sleeping by the time Santa gets here, he's going to skip our house!" And in 2008, you can forget about needing the zip code for the North Pole so that your kids can use the post office to snail-mail their lists to Santa. In today's world, kids communicate with Santa via email. Also, the lines "He sees you when you're sleeping; he knows when you're awake... etc." have a whole new meaning with the modern-day concept of Big Brother. I reminded my 4-year-old daughter the other day that Santa is always watching her and can see when she's not behaving. Her reply is what led me to wonder about the perception kids in 2008 have of Santa: "Mom, do you have blue lights on the Christmas tree cuz they have cameras and Santa can see." So somewhere my daughter had gotten the idea that Santa uses cameras to watch kids, and the cameras are inside the blue Christmas lights! I wonder, if I invest in some blue Christmas lights, will that make her behavior improve any?