

Dan's Letter™

"Please...let me introduce you to my mind...one article at a time."



FROM THE DESK OF DAN ANDERSON

A Calm Mind

A teacher and his student were talking. The student asked: "Why are most people's minds restless, and only few possess a calm mind?"

The teacher smiled and told his student a story: On day, an elephant was eating leaves. A fly landed on the elephant's ear. The elephant stayed calm and continued to eat.

The fly flew around the elephant's ear, buzzing noisily, but the elephant was unaffected. This bewildered the fly, and it asked, "Are you deaf?"

"No," the elephant answered.

"Then why aren't you bothered by my buzz?"

"Why can't you stay still just for a few moments?"

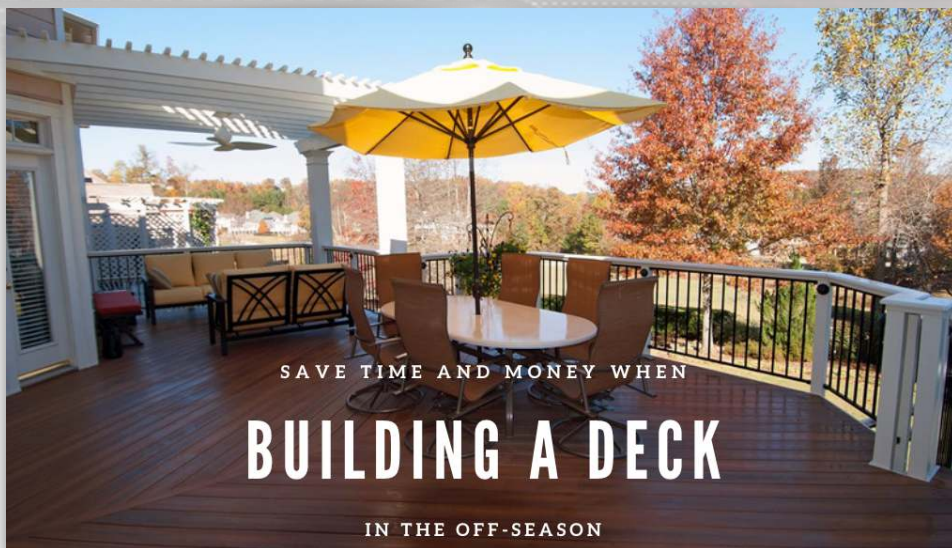
The fly replied, "Everything I see, hear and feel attracts my attention, and all noises and movements around me affect my behavior. What is your secret? How can you stay calm and still?"

The elephant stopped eating and said, "My senses do not disturb my peace. They do not rule my attention. I am in control of my mind and my thoughts. I can direct my attention where I want, and ignore disturbances, including your buzz. That's why I can stay peaceful."

At the end of the story, the student exclaimed, "Now I understand! My mind will always be in constant unrest if my senses, and whatever is happening in the world around me, are in control. On the other hand, if I am in command, able to disregard sense impressions, and control my thoughts, my mind will become calm, and I will disregard its restlessness."

"That's right," answered the teacher. "The mind goes wherever the attention goes. Control your attention, and you control your mind."

- Dan A.



(BPT) - With temperatures cooling and leaves changing from golden yellow to deep auburn, there's no denying that it's the season of all things cozy and comfy. And as you begin to hunker down and bundle up indoors, the thought of embarking on a deck building project might not be top of mind.

While home improvement retailers position transitional months as "off-season" for outdoor projects, industry insiders know there are advantages to beginning deck construction once temperate weather days arrive. From scoring a deal on building materials to booking the most in-demand builder, here are three ways you can build your dream deck under budget and in record time this off-season.

1. Book best-in-class building professionals when they're available

Since spring and summer are the busiest times of year for contractors and building professionals, you'll have a better chance of booking the most in-demand deck builder in your community during transitional months. With summer projects wrapped up, workloads are naturally lighter. As a result, deck contractors have more flexibility in their schedules and can see a project through from start to finish much quicker than when they're juggling multiple builds. They'll also have a better chance of securing necessary building permits on a quick turnaround. With fewer permit applications in the queue for local government officials' review, there should be fewer delays in the permitting process.

Continued on page 2...

2. Take advantage of seasonal savings to stretch your dollar further

Contractors and decking brands alike offer homeowners plenty of incentives to take advantage of during transitional seasons. For example, building professionals may offer reduced rates to fill gaps in their schedules. Home improvement and decking brands, like most retailers, offer competitively priced products around the holiday season to reduce inventory and make room for new products. Taking advantage of these savings opportunities can substantially lower upfront costs associated with building a deck. The best part? Now you can splurge on stylish accessories like railing post caps or LED lights ... and still stay within budget.

3. Preserve your beautiful lawn and then "spring" into landscaping projects

Deck construction can take a toll on landscaping, particularly during prime building season. In the spring, lawns tend to hold more moisture as the ground beneath begins to thaw. As a result, the ground can become increasingly soggy and is primed to muddy up shoes and retain unsightly footprints. What's more, grass and flowers are just beginning to reemerge after winter. With increased foot traffic from builders coming and going, there's also the risk of accidentally damaging budding flora. Rather than disrupt spring and summer's bloom, schedule deck construction when your yard is already gearing up for its annual hibernation. Since many plants go dormant as the air

cools and the ground freezes, it's one of the best times to build a deck without significantly impacting landscaping. By the time warm weather rolls back around, you'll be ready to tackle landscaping projects surrounding your beautiful new deck.

To create an outdoor space you can start enjoying now, consider building materials that will help extend your deck's open-air season. For example, bamboo composite deck boards and light-gauge steel frames are resilient, durable and generally low maintenance.

"When composite decking is coupled with steel framing, it forms a durable deck system that's well-equipped to host year-round and designed to last decades longer than lumber," said Toby Bostwick, VP of Product and Brand, Fortress Building Products. "Composite deck boards provide benefits like slip- and moisture-resistance to not only keep deck systems looking great year-round, but also make them safer to enjoy during any season."

If you're feeling inspired to "deck out" your backyard and savor more days spent outdoors, take note of the time and money-saving ways to tackle deck construction during the off-season.



5 Car Seat Tips To Keep Your Kids Safe



(BPT) - From the moment your child is born, you do everything in your power to keep them safe. Most parents and caregivers know the importance of car seats for protecting children, but it's also important to make sure you are choosing and using them correctly. Free online resources can help.

Now is the perfect time to brush up on these tips to help your family travel safely.

1. Always buckle up. According to the latest 2018 crash data from The National

Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), nearly 1 in 3 children under 12 killed in car crashes were not using a car seat, booster seat or seat belt at all. For kids between the ages of 8 and 14, nearly half of those killed (45%) weren't wearing their seat belts. Always remember to check that your kids are buckled up before you start the car, especially as they get older and more independent.

2. Brush up on your car seat skills. Even if you've been buckling your child into a car seat for years, it's a good idea to periodically review the basics, making sure you aren't skipping any important safety steps. Don't rush things. Take some time to practice how to properly buckle your child, using the car seat manual as a guide.

3. Consider a virtual car seat check. Certified technicians are available across the country to help you install and use your child's car seat correctly - often at no cost to you. Many also offer virtual seat checks, allowing you to speak with an expert from your own home. Look up car

seat inspection options in your community at [NHTSA.gov/TheRightSeat](https://www.nhtsa.gov/TheRightSeat).

4. Find the right seat for your child. In addition to installing the car seat correctly, it's also important to make sure your child is in the right seat for their age and size. Check the limits on your child's car seat or booster seat to know when it's time to change the seat they are using. For maximum protection in a crash, kids should not move to the next car seat type until they exceed the height or weight limits of their current seat.

5. Get to know your vehicle. Every vehicle is different. Whether you drive a pickup truck, minivan, sedan or SUV can make a difference in how your child's car seat should be installed. Check your vehicle's manual for step-by-step guidance.

You can check if your child is in the right car seat, register your car seat, and find more tips and guidance at [NHTSA.gov/TheRightSeat](https://www.nhtsa.gov/TheRightSeat).



How To Shop And Make Money Online During A Pandemic

(BPT) - Canceled plans. Working from home. Financial stress. It's no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic is causing massive disruptions in many lives. Each day, people are getting more and more creative in discovering ways to stay productive and hold on to a sense of normalcy.

Online marketplaces have seen a major increase in activity over the last six months as some scramble to outfit their home office or home gym with the necessities - while others are cleaning the house and selling things they don't use. Some are even supplementing their income by selling popular at-home items. Whether you're offering a bargain or hunting for one, here are the tips you need to be successful by selling things online.

Sell what people are looking for

As items sell out on online stores, there's an opportunity to make money by selling rare items locally. Home office items like desks and office supplies, including printers, tablets and webcams, are selling at higher prices than normal. Kids supplies like backpacks and laptops are also commanding higher interest. You can search for your item online to see what popular prices are before you sell it to maximize your profit.

Establish credibility

Whether you're buying or selling, there are few ways to make yourself stand out as credible. On the OfferUp & letgo marketplace, potential buyers and sellers can click on your profile to view your ratings, profile badges and response rates. The more complete your profile, the more trustworthy your account appears. If you're new, it may take some time to build up your reputation.

Beware of super-low prices

Watch out for potential red flags if you're buying. If a price seems too good to be true - such as a \$20 diamond ring or a \$100 brand-new phone - it likely is. Before you make an offer or commit to buying, check prices of similar items and make sure you're able to see several photos of the item.

Check shipping before you buy

Stay safe during the pandemic by choosing to ship your bought or sold items. OfferUp & letgo offers every buyer and seller access to nationwide shipping. When buyers see an item they like, they can choose to receive the item by mail, make their offer and pay through the app. Sellers receive a pre-paid shipping label and both parties can track the shipping process

Meet in a public location

If a meet-up is necessary, opt for a well-lit public location with video surveillance - and remember to keep a safe, social distance. OfferUp has created more than 2,000 public community meet-up spots so everyone involved in the transaction can feel safe and know exactly where to meet. Simply search on www.safetradespots.com for a mutual location that works for you.

Online marketplaces can be a valuable resource for procuring your buying and selling needs - and helping others find theirs. Download the OfferUp app for more tips on being a successful buyer or seller.



TAKE A BREAK!

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Solution on page 4



Turkey Pie Soup

Ingredients

3 Cup cooked turkey shredded or chopped
 3/4 Cup yellow onion
 1/2 Cup chopped celery
 3/4 Cup chopped carrots
 1/2 Cup peas
 1/2 Cup corn
 1/2 Cup green beans
 3 1/2 Cup chopped peeled potatoes
 3 cloves garlic minced
 2 1/2 tsp salt
 1 tsp ground black pepper
 1 tsp dried thyme
 3 3/4 Cup chicken broth
 1 1/2 Cup heavy cream

To your slow cooker, add prepared turkey and vegetables, along with salt, pepper, thyme, garlic and chicken broth. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours

In a medium bowl, whisk together flour and heavy cream until smooth. Pour into slow cooker, stirring to combine well. Replace cover and continue cooking for an additional 30-45 minutes. Serve warm.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From the Desk of Dan Anderson

PAGE 1

Save Time And Money When Building A Deck...

PAGE 1

5 Car Seat Tips To Keep Your Kids Safe

PAGE 2

How To Shop And Make Money Online...

PAGE 3

Take a Break!

PAGE 3

Turkey Pie Soup

PAGE 3

Healthy Sleep Is Vital...

PAGE 4

SOLUTION

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Dan's Letter™

"Please...let me introduce you to my mind...one article at a time."

Healthy Sleep Is Vital For School Success

(BPT) - Healthy sleep is vital for student success. Yet, a new survey from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) shows that many students are not getting enough sleep, according to more than half of American parents surveyed. No matter where classes are held...in-person, online or in a hybrid format - the group is highlighting the importance of healthy sleep for students.

What's keeping kids up on school nights?

From classroom to social media use, there are many things competing for the attention of school-aged children and teens, interfering with their nightly sleep. According to 90% of parents, homework and early school start times are the top barriers impacting the healthy sleep students need each night, followed by time with friends (87%), social media/electronics use (86%), hobbies (86%), sports (85%), chores or jobs (83%), and band/music/clubs (78%).

COVID-19 impact on sleep consistency

Another disrupter to sleep? The COVID-19 pandemic. One of the biggest challenges students have been facing during the pandemic



has been maintaining a consistent and healthy sleep/wake schedule. According to the survey, four out of 10 parents acknowledge that remote learning affects their children's bedtime and/or waketime consistency.

Getting the recommended hours of healthy sleep on a regular basis is associated with better outcomes, including improved attention, behavior, learning, memory, emotional regulation, quality of life, and mental and physical health. Sufficient sleep also helps students:

* Excel in the classroom by maximizing attention, memory and learning abilities

* Perform better in sports by being faster, stronger and more accurate

* Feel their best and have a more optimistic attitude toward life

* Look their best and maintain a healthy weight

* Have fun and enjoy life by making better decisions and staying safe

The benefits of healthy sleep require not only adequate sleep duration, but also appropriate timing, daily regularity, good sleep quality and the absence of sleep disorders. The AASM recommends children 6-12 years of age sleep nine to 12 hours on a regular basis to promote optimal health, while teenagers 13-18 years of age should sleep eight to 10 hours per night.

For more information, visit sleepeducation.org/student-sleep-health-week. For more on the July 2020 Consumer Survey, visit <https://aasm.org/about/newsroom/>.