

# Make Summer Learning Fun

*for your Child and You, Too!*

You are your child's first and most important teacher. How well children and youth do in school depends a lot on how much their families help them learn at home, and this should be a year-round effort.

For many young people, however, learning stops during the summer, and this can mean trouble. Children and youth who take a summer holiday from learning typically lose *one to two months' worth of reading and math skills*. They score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer than they do on the same tests at the beginning of summer.

There are lots of ways you can keep your children and teens learning over the summer. Find out what they enjoy and what will keep them motivated. Turn everyday activities into learning-rich experiences for them and you.

Try some of these great ideas and tips:

- **Read, read, read!** Visit your local library often with your child. Get your child his own library card and get one for yourself if you don't already have one.
  - Register your child for the library's free summer reading program – encourage your child to read a certain amount to win incentive prizes.
  - Read to and with your child, no matter her age.
  - Obtain the summer reading list from your school district (check the library, local bookstores or the school's Web site) and make sure your child has access to the books for his grade. Once your child chooses a book to read, read it yourself and talk together about what you're reading.
  - Have lots of things to read all over your house – newspapers, magazines, story books, comics, etc.
- **Practice math daily**, as part of activities like cooking, grocery shopping, tracking weather and temperatures, etc. Teaching your child how to read a recipe, measure the ingredients and divide portions equally is a great way to learn fractions.
- **Encourage your child to write and draw.** Give her a journal or notebook (or make one together) and have plenty of pencils, crayons, markers or paints on hand. Give your child a family photo or one cut out of a magazine and have him make up a story or poem about it.
- **Break out the board games** and have a weekly family game night. Games such as checkers, chess, Scrabble, Monopoly and Connect Four help youth develop critical thinking skills.

*(please see reverse side)*

- **Prepare for fall.** Find out what your child will be learning during the next school year by talking with teachers at that grade level. Have your child preview and practice using free online materials (try [www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com)) or inexpensive workbooks from teacher supply stores.
- **Get out and about.**
  - Get outside and play; limit TV and video game time. Children of all ages need lots of physical activity to stay fit and mentally sharp.
  - Enjoy nature – have a picnic, plant a tree, tend a garden, go on a hike and observe plants and animals.
  - Take educational trips to places like local parks, museums, zoos and science centers. Have your child help you look for information about places to visit and let her choose where you will go. Look for coupons and discount tickets and pack your own snacks and drinks to make these trips more affordable.
  - Let your child take photos of your “field trips” with a digital or disposable camera and encourage him to make a slide show, Web page or poster about your trips.
- **Do good deeds.** Encourage your child to serve others in your community, by doing yard work for an elderly neighbor, visiting a nursing home or hospital, donating old toys or clothes, or working at a food bank or animal shelter. This helps with social and emotional development.
- **Keep to a regular routine.** Though summer should be more relaxed, children still need some structure to guide their days and keep them sleeping well and eating right.

**Do you have older youth in your family? Try some of these ideas with them:**

- **Find something that interests your teenager and learn more about it together.**
- **Have your teen teach you something that she knows how to do,** like how to set up a page on a social networking site or text message on your cell phone.
- **Create a family history.** Encourage your teen to interview relatives, do genealogy research (try [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)) and write your family’s story or post it online.
- **Explore your family’s cultural and ethnic heritage more deeply.** Cook traditional dishes together; talk about the meaning of traditions and customs in your family.
- **Follow current events and politics.** Read news articles aloud to your teen, then discuss what you have read. Encourage your teen to speak out on local issues that are important to him, for example, by writing a letter to the editor of the newspaper or to a government official.



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