



Summer is for Reading

How to Improve Your Child's Reading Skills

- Read aloud to your child every day.
- Have your child read aloud to you.
- Share your love of books with your child.
- Let your child see you reading for pleasure.
- Praise your child for reading.

Smarter Fun in the Summer

When you think of summer vacations, what comes to mind? Long, lazy days with no homework in sight? Books gathering dust on a shelf until September rolls around again? Cartoons blaring on the television all day long?

For many kids, summer is a time when learning stops—and this can mean trouble. Kids who take a holiday from learning during summer vacation typically lose one to two months worth of reading and math performance. That's a lot of hard work down the drain! It also means that teachers have to spend the first four to eight weeks of the new school year re-teaching what kids have forgotten.

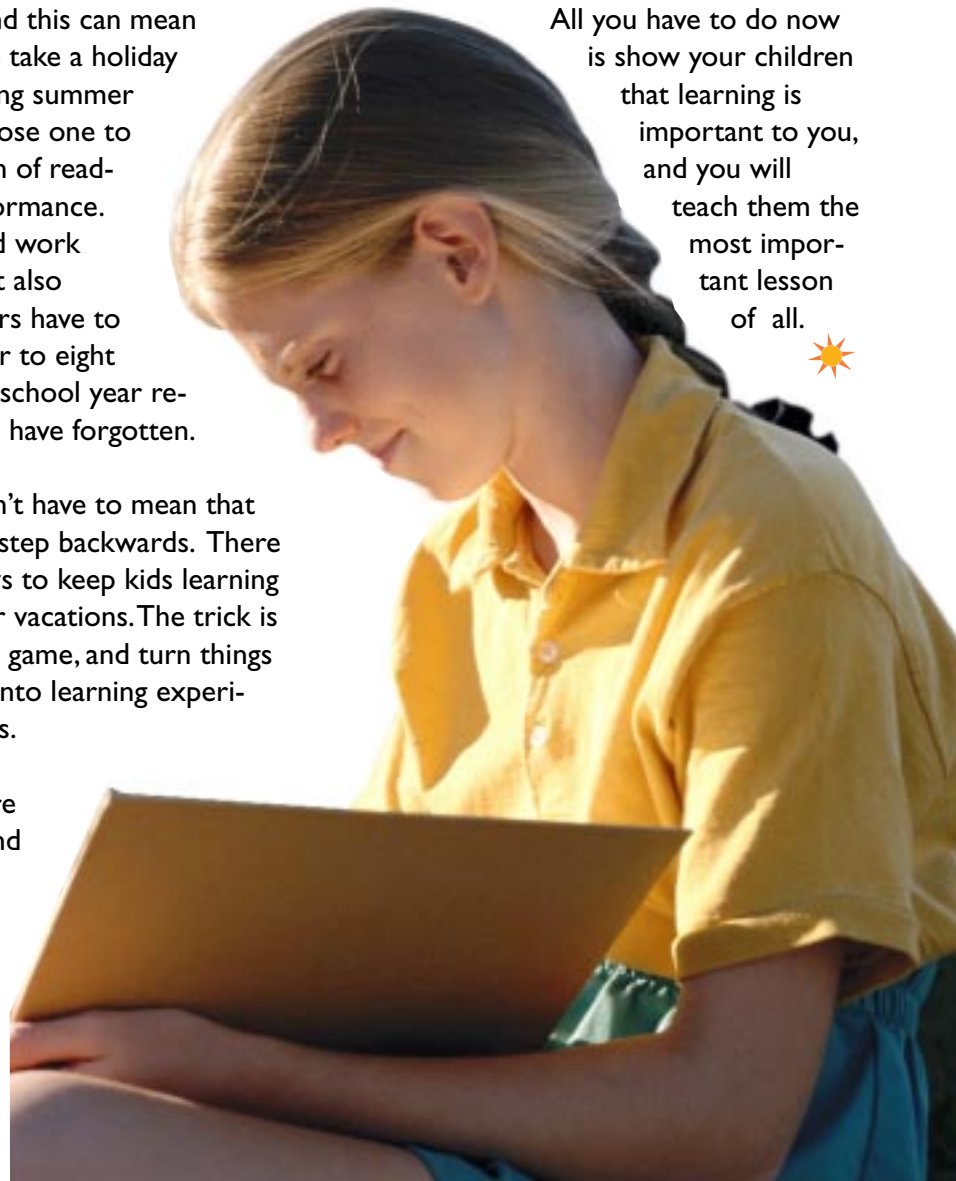
But summer doesn't have to mean that your child takes a step backwards. There are lots of fun ways to keep kids learning over their summer vacations. The trick is to make learning a game, and turn things you do every day into learning experiences for your kids.

As a parent you are your child's first and most important teacher. When children are young they learn how to talk by listening to their

parents. Parents teach children how to feed and dress themselves. Helping children learn critical academic skills as they grow older can be just as easy.

How well kids do in school depends a lot on how much their families help them learn at home. You've been teaching your children life lessons all along.

All you have to do now is show your children that learning is important to you, and you will teach them the most important lesson of all.



Summer Learning Can be Fun

Activities for Younger Children



A Walk in the Clouds

Take a few minutes to lie in the grass with your child.

Look up at the sky and watch the clouds. Start a story about a cloud shape... what does it look like? An animal? A robot? A flower? How does the cloud change? Does it look like something else?

Story-telling is a great way to learn. Clouds are a great way to start stories!

Story Time

Help your child develop creativity and improve vocabulary by creating stories.

Take a family photo, or cut a picture from a magazine or the newspaper. Then ask your child: Who is the person in this photo? What do you think is happening in this photo? What is this person doing or thinking? Encourage your children to be as silly as they want to be. If they can write, have them write down the story they make up. They may also want to draw pictures to go with the story.

Post this page on your refrigerator for easy access to everyday learning ideas!

Cooking

Cooking is one of the best ways to teach kids about math and science.

- Teach your child how to read a recipe and measure the ingredients. Use a set of measuring cups to show the difference in volume between one cup of flour and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup.
- Make a pie. Cut it into four equal pieces and show your child how fractions work in real life. Then cut it into eight equal pieces and explain the idea that different fractions can still add up to the same whole.
- Serve yogurt for dessert. Yogurt has bacteria in it that helps you digest your food. Talk with your child about the "good" bacteria that is in yogurt, and compare that with "bad" bacteria that can make you sick. Talk about ways to keep "bad" bacteria from getting into your food. This can include keeping the food cold and cooking it until bacteria are dead. Talk about the reasons for washing your hands before you cook or eat.
- Check your local library for books about cooking and science. A good one is called *Simple Kitchen Experiments: Learning Science with Everyday Foods*, by Muriel Mandel.



Summer Learning Can be Fun

Activities for Older Children

FOOD & CULTURE

Visit a local ethnic restaurant or grocery store.

Talk about how food is such an important part of culture and history. Challenge your child to try a new recipe with ingredients you have never used before. Think together about why your family eats certain foods or uses certain spices while other people have different preferences.



Learn Something with Your Teenager

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Dance. Chess. Stars. Go on a learning journey with your older child.

Find something that interests your teenager and learn more about it together. Visit the library or community center for books or classes and do something new. Your child will appreciate that learning is a life-long activity, and you'll have priceless time with your child. Consider having your child teach you something like how to use a computer in short "classes" every week.

Grow a Family Tree

Encourage your teenager to create a family history.

The project may include interviews with elderly relatives, research on historical events, and writing your family's story.

To prepare for interviews, talk about the kinds of open-ended questions that will bring rich responses. For example, instead of asking, "Do you like living here?" your teen might ask, "Tell me about an experience you had in this neighborhood that makes you feel good about living here."

Push your teen to think about how social and political events make a difference in family histories: Did someone in your family fight in a war? Did someone attend segregated schools? Did someone immigrate to America and when?

Write it down! Think together about how you might present the family history. Will you include a journal, photographs or an essay? Make it easy to copy so you can give the Family History as a gift to relatives.

Newsworthy Ideas

Read a story about politics in the newspaper with your older child.

Ask your teenager questions about the newspaper article. Explore ideas to fix problems in your community. Write a letter to the editor or an elected official about an important issue.

What is My Child Doing at the Club?

Learning! More than just playing sports and hanging out in a safe environment, children at local Boys & Girls Clubs are spending extra time learning.

Local Clubs are helping young people become high-achieving students with fun learning activities every day. Club members are reading, writing and joining clubs focused on math and computers. Even games like Scrabble teach kids how to think critically.

These activities are part of Project Learn, a program from Boys & Girls Clubs of America and JCPenney Afterschool. To learn more call 1-800-845-CLUB or visit www.bgca.org.

SPOTLIGHT: Boys & Girls Club of Santa Ana, California Making a Better Life

Families in Santa Ana, California are working hard to create a culture of learning for their children. The "Comite de Cien Familias" (Committee of 100 Families) meets regularly and works together to improve life for families by creating economic opportunities. By addressing the core issues of work, housing, health, safety and nutrition, the group works to break the cycle of poverty in the community.



for meetings and activities.

For more information visit their Web site at <http://boysand-girlsclub.com>.

IDEA: Start your own Committee of 100 Families! Contact your local Boys & Girls Club and ask about space to hold a meeting. Invite families to come and do learn-

ing projects with their children. Become a parent leader in your community! ✨

Manuel Ballestero is a teacher at Pio Pico Elementary School. He notes "The priority for these families is earning a living. We're trying to share that school is the road out of poverty."

Parents know that, even if they can't read or do higher-level math, they can stress the importance of school. Parent coordinator Imelda Ventura says that parents can make a difference just by going to the school or asking to see homework.

During the school breaks, families continue to emphasize learning. They make sure that their children are safe and go to the Boys & Girls Club where there are structured learning activities. Children read and play learning games. Parents visit the Club

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