



## 8 Tips to Encourage Summer Learning

As parents of young children, you play a key role in your children's education, especially during the summer months. Try these Summer suggestions to encourage your children to review academic skills and have fun at the same time.

### 1. Plan ahead.

Schedule times for literacy and learning during the week. Children love books that make them laugh. Block in a time for reading experiences each day then fill it up with some of the fun activities below.

### 2. Take advantage of local libraries.

Libraries often have programs for children that encourage summer learning and usually have playgrounds close by. Tire the children out at the playground first, then have a restful time in the library.

To nurture a love of books, let the kids bring lots of books home even if they don't read them all. Provide a special basket or box for library books near a cozy reading nook so the library books don't get lost or damaged.

### 3. Read aloud to your children.

Take turns reading and keep the reading level easy to create an enjoyable summer experience. Let your children create a signal, such as wiggling their finger, to indicate when they want help. Otherwise be quiet and let the kids figure out the words. Do not expect perfection or over correct. The goal is to inspire children to love reading. Read the books your children choose even if they choose the same ones over and over.

Instead of reading quietly to yourself when reading pamphlets, menus, or sales flyers, model reading out loud to get information. Let your children hear you reading everything from TV guides to directional signs at the park. If they ask or start reading too, be quiet and let them take over.

Let your children see you reading quietly too. Schedule reading times when the TV is turned off and all family members are reading books of their choice.

#### 4. Act out stories and make up stories

Reread favorite and funny stories then introduce children to the fun of acting them out. Don't worry about replicating the story exactly. Make simple picture book props, like a cut out, "Very, Hungry, Caterpillar," and then act the stories out. Visit this page for lists of great books.

[http://www.kindergarten-lessons.com/picture\\_books\\_for\\_children/](http://www.kindergarten-lessons.com/picture_books_for_children/)

Have everyone draw a character or thing on lightweight card (cereal boxes work), cut it out and tape on a wooden stick for instant puppets. Make new stories by having each person add a sentence to the story.

#### 5. Play board games

Playing board games with children is an excellent way for them to learn to share and take turns, to cooperate with each other, to increase logical thinking skills, and to review and learn basic math concepts, as well as letters, colors, and shapes.

Check out this page for criteria for choosing board games for 4 – 7-year-olds.

[http://www.kindergarten-lessons.com/preschool\\_board\\_games/](http://www.kindergarten-lessons.com/preschool_board_games/)

#### 6. Supply art materials

Provide a variety of paper, a stapler, and other art materials, such as the watercolor crayons above to inspire children to make booklets, newspapers or other published items.

Don't put all art supplies out at once. Slowly introduce the art supplies throughout the summer or rotate them so children will have something new to stimulate their curiosity.

Make homemade clipboards with heavy cardboard and attach a pencil with string and tape. Hold paper securely with wide elastic bands. Make lists with your kids as you walk around with the clipboards. 10 favorite bugs, animals in the garden, what we want to do today or things to take camping.

#### 7. Go on an "I wonder walk".

Take paper and pencil and go outside and take turns asking and recording five "I wonder why" questions.

I wonder where this creek starts; I wonder why this leaf is curled, I wonder why the sea anemones are not on this side of the tide pool.

Investigate one question at a time with your kids. Visit the library and look for books to answer your questions. Make mini answer booklets together.

## 8. Stop, listen and inquire

Encourage your children to think things through and have discussions. As a parents, I know you are busy and the lists of errands and chores rarely grows shorter, so schedule times to chat with your kids.

Plan activities where you work or play side by side and encourage conversation with open-ended questions. Hold back from explaining everything to your children and overloading them with your wisdom and insights. Celebrate their tiny accomplishments without pointing out all the bits that could be improved. Instead, wait for a later time to reteach the skill.

Instead of asking questions that require one-word answers, try open-ended questions such as:

- If you could change 2 things about ..., what would they be?
- That's an interesting idea, how did you come up with that?
- What is your understanding of what happened to the...?
- In what ways do you think we could ...?
- Can you think of another way to ...?

If you want to encourage your kids to talk to you, don't correct, lecture, or get upset with their answers. Try to appreciate and comprehend their logic and thinking processes. Calmly repeat back your understanding of what they said, and generally, they will tell you more.