

Report to PARENTS

Exercise Kids' Minds During the Summer

If students laze away the days of summer without using their minds, they can lose up to a month of learning—especially in reading and math. Stem the summer slide and keep your child engaged with these fun, brain-friendly activities.

Devise a plan. Tell your child that reading and learning activities will be an important part of their summer. Assure them that they'll still have lots of time for play.

Teach mini-lessons. Transform everyday activities into learning opportunities. Children can count change, read directions for a trip, write a shopping list, or calculate a recipe's measurements.

Gather activity books. Give children their own activity book with crossword puzzles or number games customized for their specific age group. Set a "due date" to keep them on track, but let them work at their own pace.

Initiate a writing project. Have your child keep a summer journal, write letters to family members or friends, or craft a play to perform with siblings or neighbors. Or, start a family cookbook with your favorite recipes, instructions, and shopping lists.

Strategize screen time. Educational computer games or apps can engage students' minds, but make sure your child is spending enough time away from the screen. Assign a daily block of time for family members to turn off phones, computers, and the TV, and instead play a board game or read together.

Designate daily reading blocks. Set aside at least 15 minutes a day for your entire family to read. (That means parents, too!) Find reading recommendations by grade level on the American Library Association's book lists (see Web Resources). Organize a summer read-a-thon with goals for each family member, or sign your child up for your library's summer book club.

Go global. Set aside several nights during the summer to have an international evening. Together, cook a meal with recipes from a different nation. Learn basic words in that country's language. Find the country on a map, and together examine a book or article with information on what life is like there.



Sneak learning into family trips. If your family is able to take a vacation during the summer, include stops at zoos, children's museums, or historic sites. Have your child help you plot out the journey using maps and keep a journal along the way. Older children can tally up miles, keep track of expenses, or compute gas mileage.

Get moving. Build physical activity into your child's summer days. Even if he or she can't participate in a local sports league or community-based team, encourage activities such as jumping rope, playing catch, and taking family walks.

For more resources, look to your child's school and your local library or community center for ideas to keep kids' brains buzzing during the dog days of summer.

Web Resources

The **American Library Association** compiles grade-level book lists.
www.ala.org/alsc/compubs/booklists/summerreadinglist

The **National Summer Learning Association** offers activities, tools, and links.
www.summerlearning.org/?page=activity_resource