



Keep Up the Momentum

Tips for Making Summer Learning Fun and Meaningful

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Keep it simple



You don't have to run a 3-ring circus in order to make learning meaningful and fun. For example, teach your child math games that can be played with playing cards or dice (see list of websites attached). A new notebook can make writing fun and exciting.

Mix it up

Use games and other learning activities to engage your child. Try to limit your use of worksheets and workbooks.

Choice! Choice! Choice!

A key component in engaging and motivating students is to give them choices in their learning. Giving them choice can be as easy as choosing the subject they would like to research, or the order in which they complete learning activities.





Give and Take

If there are particular books you'd like your child to read during the summer, and she wants to choose the books she reads, make a deal with her. For example, alternate between your choice of book and the child's choice. Say, "When you read this book (that I choose), you may choose the next book."



Think outside the box

Students spend a lot of time using paper and pencil. Giving them alternate tools is very motivating and feels less like "work" and more like fun.

Individual whiteboard—giving a child of any age a whiteboard and marker is like magic! Suddenly, the "work" doesn't feel like work anymore. Individual whiteboards are available at learning stores such as Lakeshore Learning in Walnut Creek and The Golden Apple in Pleasanton. They may also be available at Target or office supply stores. Use a small whiteboard for math, spelling practice, or writing short responses to questions.

Tactile materials—when practicing sight words or spelling, have your child trace the words in sand or on the carpet, form the words with yarn, or make the words with glue (which he can trace when the glue dries).

Take advantage of everyday technology



There are hundreds of educational apps available for the iPhone or iPod touch. If your child is practicing reading fluently, record him/her and play it back. Children grades 2-5 will be able to recognize their strengths and target areas to improve. Or, instead of writing a report, have your child make a podcast or a Power Point Presentation.

READING

Give your child CHOICE

Remember that giving your child choice in his reading is critical for motivation and success.

Read aloud to your child

Children of any age benefit from being read to. This is a great way for your child to enjoy literature that is too difficult for him to read independently, as well as an opportunity to strengthen his comprehension.

Have your child read aloud to you

Even if your child is a strong independent reader, her fluency and comprehension skills will be strengthened by reading aloud.

Encourage independent reading

Help your child develop a "reading habit". Even children who aren't able to read words independently can read by looking at the pictures, which often tell the story.

Read WITH your child

Dig deep into stories with your child. Help him to interact with the text in meaningful ways.

Try these strategies:

- Ask your child probing questions about the book and connect the events to his or her own life. For example, say "I wonder why that girl did that?" or "How do you think he felt? Why?"
- Help your child make connections between what he or she reads and similar experiences he has felt, seen in a movie, or read in another book.
- Help your child go back to the text to support his or her answers.
- Discuss the meanings of unknown words, both those he reads and those he hears.

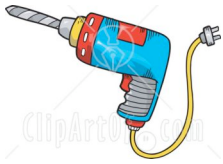
Struggling Readers

If your child is a struggling reader, consider reading more difficult text together and allow her to choose the books she reads independently. For students entering 4th and 5th grade, use the summer to preview science and social studies concepts that your child will learn next year. You can find the California state standards at the Department of Education website:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp>. Here is a link to a website designed to support parents of struggling readers: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/readingstrats.html>

Math

Avoid “drill and kill”



While it is critical that students memorize math facts, memorization alone will not deepen your child’s mathematical understanding. You want to engage her in activities that engage problem solving skills. An excellent website for problem solving practice is www.mathplayground.com. Online games can be a fun way to practice math facts and computation. Try www.funbrain.com.

Use games

Board games such as Life and Monopoly require children to use mathematical skills. There are *easy-to-play games* for all ages using playing cards and dice. See the following websites for these games:



http://childparenting.about.com/od/makeathomemathgames/Make_at_Home_Math_Games.htm and <http://www.learn-with-math-games.com/dice-math-games.html>.



Websites to support summer learning

Adventures in summer learning

http://www.readingrockets.org/shows/launching/summer_reading

Summer activities

www.thinkfinity.com

<http://www.internet4classrooms.com/parents.htm>

How to choose a just right book

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/28279>

Booklists

<http://www.readingrockets.org/books/booksbytheme>

Educational apps for iphone and ipod touch

<http://www.apple.com/education/apps/>

Website for parents of struggling readers:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/readingstrats.html>

(see next page for more websites)

Audio books –developing a summer “listening” program

<http://www.ldonline.org/article/15904>

Summer reading

http://www.readingrockets.org/atoz/summer_reading

Math computation practice

www.funbrain.com

Math problem solving

www.mathplayground.com

Math games that can be played with dice and/or playing cards

<http://www.learn-with-math-games.com/dice-math-games.html>

http://childparenting.about.com/od/makeathomemathgames/Make_at_Home_Math_Games.htm

Summer field trips

Oakland Museum of California <http://museumca.org/exhibitions>

Lindsey Wildlife Museum <http://www.wildlife-museum.org/education/kids/childrens.php>

Lawrence Hall of Science <http://www.lawrencehallofscience.org/>

(current exhibit--Scream Machines: The Science of Roller Coasters)