

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

May 2023

Enjoy fun times with your child while promoting summer reading

Your child has worked hard to build reading skills, vocabulary and background knowledge this year. At least 30 minutes a day of reading over the summer will help keep those skills from getting rusty.

Encourage a wide variety of reading activities. Include lots that allow you and your child to interact in fun ways—you'll keep your child interested and foster a lifelong love of reading.



To make reading together a daily pleasure for both of you:

- **Take turns.** When you read aloud, read one sentence in a book. Then pass it to your child to read the next. Or you read the narrative, and let your child read what the characters say.
- **Act it out.** Select a simple scene from one of your child's books. Assign character roles. Discuss what happens first, second, next. Then act the story out, adding lots of dialogue.
- **Get practical.** Do ordinary tasks together that involve reading. Ask your child to read directions to you while you drive. Or put your child in charge of reading the instructions while you build or repair something.
- **Share a laugh and some news.** Look for a newspaper with comics, in print or online. Ask your child which one is the funniest. Then discuss sports, the weather, letters to the editor, travel destinations, etc.



Show your child how useful math is

Elementary school math skills are essential life skills your child will rely on for years to come. Involving your child in everyday math activities at home makes it clear just how important these skills are. Have your child help you:

- **Cook a meal.** Put your student in charge of weighing and measuring. Discuss sizes, shapes and fractions. Ask questions, such as "How could we double this recipe?" and "When we add one quarter cup to one quarter cup, what do we get?"
- **Plan a family project.** Painting a room? Involve your child in figuring out how much paint you will need to complete the job.
- **Follow a budget.** How much will your family have to save each week to afford a treat at the end of the month? Together, track your progress on a chart.
- **Relax with games.** Lots of fun games involve math skills. Try dominoes, Uno, Connect Four and Monopoly.

Big task? Take small steps

Is your child tackling a big year-end project? Help your student break it down into smaller pieces by asking questions like: *Will you need to do research? Have you decided what kind of outline to make? Do we have the supplies you'll need to make a poster?* Then have your child schedule the time necessary to complete each step on a calendar. Celebrate as your child checks off each one!

Listen for science learning

Help your child discover a fun fact about ears with this science experiment:



1. **Have** your child sit with eyes closed and one ear covered.
2. **Tiptoe** around your child while clapping your hands. Can your child point to your location?
3. **Repeat** with both ears uncovered.

Two ears make it easier to pinpoint the direction a sound comes from because the sound reaches the closer ear first.

Source: D. Yuhas, "Sound Science: Where Did That Noise Come From?" *Scientific American*.

Try brainstorming activities

Brainstorming is a fun and creative way to come up with ideas and solutions. Your child can brainstorm to figure out a topic for a project, or how to divide complex concepts into bite-sized pieces to learn. Encourage your child to brainstorm by:



- **Making** lists of related words, facts and ideas.
- **Asking** "what if" questions.
- **Observing** and writing down what sights bring to mind.



How can I bolster learning over the summer?

Q: Fourth grade has been a challenging year—my child will pass, but just barely. I don't have money for a tutor. But I know my student needs help or next year will be worse. What can I do over the summer to help my child catch up?

A: There are a number of things you can do to help put your child on track for fifth grade, but it's important to start now. Here's how:



- **Meet with your child's teacher** before school lets out to find out exactly where the issues are. If your child is struggling in math, for example, what concepts are difficult? Ask the teacher about resources and strategies to use with your child, and about free programs that may be available over the summer. Together, lay out a learning plan.
- **Eliminate medical factors.** Have your child's vision and hearing tested so you can rule out or address issues.
- **Establish learning goals.** Give your child a say in choosing goals.
- **Set a daily study time** to work on school skills.
- **Have fun exploring and learning together.** Visit museums, historic sites, zoos, and other interesting places near your home. Attend a free concert. Go on a hike and look for birds or animals, then try to identify them. All these experiences provide a foundation for learning.



Are you raising a confident reader?

Being a supportive audience when your child reads aloud is an important way to boost motivation and progress. Are you encouraging your child's reading confidence? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you choose** some books at read aloud time that have repetitive letter sounds, words and phrases?
2. **Do you encourage** your child to reread favorite books?
3. **Do you listen** patiently? Avoid frequently interrupting your child with corrections.
4. **Do you give** your child time to decode a word before you supply it?
5. **Do you provide** lots of praise and encouragement when your child reads?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping develop your child's skills and motivation to read. For each no, try that idea.

"The journey of a lifetime starts with the turning of a page."
—Rachel Anders

Consider community service

This summer, consider adding volunteer activities to your family's plans. Volunteering in the community teaches children they can make a difference. They learn about responsibility, compassion and more. Your family might help:

- **Remove** litter from a favorite local park or waterway.
- **Construct** or repair a home for someone in need. Look for an organization that allows children to help when they have family supervision.
- **Collect** supplies for a food bank or shelter. Your child may be able to sort food or fill bags with toiletries.
- **Raise** awareness for a charity working on a cause that matters to your child.

Issue a learning challenge

For students, summer usually means less stress and more free time.

So it's a great time to challenge your child to experiment with subjects and skills that may be out of the comfort zone.

A child who has never felt like an athlete could try a new sport. An active child might learn to play an instrument. Trying and mastering hard things is how children learn.



Conduct a year-end review

Before the school year ends, help your child review how things have gone and make plans for the future. Together, discuss:

- **The best parts.** What was your child's favorite project? Most improved subject?
- **Successes.** How did your child overcome obstacles? How did effort pay off?
- **Goals.** What does your child want to accomplish this summer? Next year?

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