

# *How to Keep Your Child Learning Over the Summer*

## **Overview**

Activities that can keep your child learning over the summer while having fun and exploring new interests.

- Visit your public library
- Take advantage of community events
- Activities children can do on their own or with little help

During the summer months, most parents want their school-age children to relax after the busy school year. But how can you make sure your child doesn't stop learning altogether during the summer? Exploring special interests -- sports, music, books, and more -- can be a wonderful way to have fun and keep learning. Your child can enjoy many simple low- or no-cost activities at home or in your community on her own or with little or no help from you.

## **Visit your public library**

Your local public library is a great place to find summer learning resources.

- *Find out if your library has a summer reading program.* Your child may be able to choose a topic or theme to organize his selection of books or join a group focused on reading and discussion. Often the library summer reading program offers incentives and recognition for the number of books read, which adds to the fun of the program.
- *Check out books of TV-free activities.* Most libraries have books that describe easy, low- or no-cost activities your child can enjoy alone or with you. You might start with *365 TV-Free Activities You Can Do With Your Child* (Adams Media, 2002) by Steve Bennett and Ruth Bennett, which describes many fun projects that are also educational, such as word or number games.
- *Check out audio books.* Libraries have books on tape or CD which allow your child to read along with the narrator. Books on tape or CD can be used to give your child experience with stories above her independent reading level. Audio books are also entertaining and a great activity on family car trips during the summer.
- *Look for magazines your child might enjoy.* Many children love magazines, which often include an engaging mix of stories and activities. There are dozens of age-appropriate magazines available, including the following:
  - *Ladybug*, [www.cricketmag.com](http://www.cricketmag.com), stories and poems. Ages 3–6.
  - *Spider*, [www.cricketmag.com](http://www.cricketmag.com), stories and activities. Ages 6–9, or children who have started reading independently.
  - *Sports Illustrated for Kids*, [www.sikids.com](http://www.sikids.com), a children's version of *Sports Illustrated*, with posters and contests. Ages 8 and up.
  - *StoneSoup*, [www.stonesoup.com](http://www.stonesoup.com), stories, articles, and poems. Ages 8–13.
  - *Cricket*, [www.cricketmag.com](http://www.cricketmag.com), fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and activities. Ages 9–13.

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- *Calliope*, [www.cobblestonepub.com](http://www.cobblestonepub.com), articles on world history from ancient times to the present. Ages 9 and up.
- *Faces*, [www.cobblestonepub.com](http://www.cobblestonepub.com), articles and photos on world cultures and geography. Ages 9 and up.
- *National Geographic Kids*, [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com), a children's version of *National Geographic* that has news, games, ideas for science projects, and more. Ages 9 and up.
- *Odyssey*, [www.odysseymagazine.com](http://www.odysseymagazine.com), science articles and activities. Ages 10 and up.
- *Muse*, [www.cricketmag.com](http://www.cricketmag.com), articles on exploration and discovery in art, history, and the sciences. Ages 10 and up.

### **Take advantage of community events**

Many community groups organize family-oriented summer events to celebrate a state or local historic event or landmark. Your community may also have the following:

- *Festivals celebrating a culture represented in the community.* These events are usually free and may include food, music, dancing, craft exhibits, and more. You can find out about them from the calendar of events in your local newspaper or by searching for them online.
- *Nature activities.* Many zoos, parks, and nature centers have summer programs for children. You may also find that just spending time outdoors in a local park or recreation area sparks a new interest in your child.
- *Art, music, and drama performances.* In addition to watching shows, your child may be able to participate in performances or related workshops designed for fun and skill-building. Check your local newspaper and the Y or community center for information about these offerings. Your city or town may also have a visitor center with a Web site that lists upcoming cultural events and performances.
- *Museum-based activities.* Museums of all sizes may have programs for children. They may also have special exhibits, classes, or programs for children during the summer and offer free or reduced admission on certain days.

### **Activities children can do on their own or with little help**

Your child can enjoy many other fun, educational activities on his own, such as the following:

- *Make her own story.* Use a disposable camera, take pictures, and write captions.
- *Read the newspaper.* Choose a topic that interests her and check for it in the paper every day. She could follow baseball on the sports page, for example, and clip the baseball stats.

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- *Interview your family and make a family tree.* Contact grandparents and other older relatives to see how many generations of family they can remember. An older child or a teenager might want to do additional genealogical research on a computer.
- *Start a neighborhood newsletter.* Your child could write a sports column about Little League and other events, review movies she's seen or books she's read, or interview neighbors about what they did on their summer vacation.
- *Keep a journal.* Use a bound drawing book without lines if he wants to incorporate drawings in his journal.
- *Plant a garden.* Your child can plant a garden in a flower pot or a window box.
- *Find a pen pal in another state or another country.* Contact World Pen Pals, [www.world-pen-pals.com](http://www.world-pen-pals.com) or International PenFriends Program at [www.penfriends.org](http://www.penfriends.org) to find a pen pal.
- *Explore your community and draw a map.* Start with your own neighborhood and then expand the map.
- *Reinforce math counting and measurement skills by running a lemonade stand.* Measuring ingredients and keeping track of change are great ways to have fun and practice basic math skills.
- *Go for a nature walk in your neighborhood.* What kinds of plants and animals do you see?
- *Get interested in a musician, dancer, or other performer,* or his or her kind of music. Learn more about the person and his or her art.
- *Find out how a child who lived in your area would have spent the summer 100 years ago.*
- *Start a collection.* Summer is a great time to start a collection of postcards, stamps, dried leaves or flowers, or other items that spark your child's curiosity.
- *Camp out* (in the woods or the backyard or the dining room).

If you'd like other ideas on how to keep your child learning over the summer, remember that the program that provided this publication has many helpful resources.

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All or none of these ideas may be right for your child -- the possibilities are as wide as your child's interests. Too much free time can be boring, but most children need some time to themselves, to do what they want or to discover their creative side. Learning about what's available in your community and about your own child's interests and personality will help you find the right balance this summer.

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