

How to Keep Kids' Brains Stimulated Over the Summer

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School is out for the summer — and learning is the last thing on your kids' minds. But as a parent, it's natural to be concerned with a summer backslide. After all, a summer free of learning may cause your child to be behind at the start the new school year. Keep their minds sharp and active during the summer by planning activities that stimulate their brain.

Build Something Together

Help your kids build a bird or doghouse. Following the directions enhances their reading skills and measuring reinforces their math skills. This fun learning activity of creating something useful using their own hands and mind creates a sense of pride in their accomplishment.

Challenge Them to a Read-a-Thon

Designate a family reading time (parents included). Everyone can spend time reading and then take turns talking about what they have read.

Conduct Science Experiments

Find experiments that can be done safely at home using household items. Kids can read the directions, make the shopping list for supplies and measure any ingredients needed.

Create an Environment for Healthy Sleep

Healthy sleep allows your child's body to repair and restore itself physically and mentally. A well-rested mind is more alert and eager to learn. Recommended hours of sleep per day by age:

- Children ages 3 – 5: 11 to 14 hours per 24 hours
- Children ages 6 - 12: 9 to 12 hours per 24 hours
- Children ages 13 – 18: 8 to 10 hours per 24 hours

Encourage Them to Keep a Journal

Try writing a prompt at the top of the page to give your kids a place to start or begin a story and let each person take a turn writing a part of it. You can even let the kids illustrate the story or

write messages back and forth to each other.

Enroll Them in Summer Camps

Sign them up for summer camps that encourage math, science and reading.

Find Free Online Educational Websites

Many websites provide learning through free games and adventures that engage children. These websites have multiple levels that keep your child stimulated and advance in difficulty as your child masters the skills being taught.

Have a Regularly Scheduled Family Game Night

Set aside one night a week to play board games or dominoes with the whole family. Moving the playing piece the correct number of spaces reinforces math skills and reading the cards helps in reading.

Have a Scavenger Hunt

Using maps, have your kids follow clues and solve problems to help them find the hidden items.

Take Family Field Trips

Spend the day with your kids at a local museum, nature center or zoo. Explore, laugh together and talk about what you're seeing, experiencing and feeling.

Take Them Grocery Shopping

Have your child write the grocery list, and then use the shopping experience to discuss prices and making healthy food choices.

Team Plan a Family Vacation

By allowing the kids to assist in researching vacation destinations, you're encouraging them to read. Having them stick to the budget and letting them create a calendar to count down the days until vacation uses their math and reasoning skills. If you can't go on a real vacation, let them play travel agent to plan an imaginary trip.

Use Your Kitchen as a Classroom

Spend time cooking or baking with the kids. Use simple recipes that encourage kids to read the directions and use their math skills to measure ingredients. The payoff is delicious.

Take a Deep Breath

Though no one wants to admit it, it can be even more difficult in the summer to balance your work and home priorities. But remember that summer is supposed to be a time to make memories and for everyone to recharge their batteries — including you. Use the ideas that stand out to you and feel right for your family, but don't feel pressured for you or your kiddos to accomplish them all.

We're here to help you and your children on your whole health journey. Reach out to your [pediatrician](#) if you need support or other ideas to help your kids feel whole this summer.

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