

# Experts offer tips to prevent children's learning loss during summer

June 12 2013

---

With school out and a long summer break ahead, many children are in danger of forgetting what they've learned during the academic year.

UT experts are offering tips on how children can stay sharp and exercise their brain muscles during the hot summer months.

"Learning over the summer does not have to be stressful or laborious," said Matt Devereaux, an associate professor in the Department of Family and [Consumer Sciences](#) in UT's Institute of Agriculture.

Research shows that the biggest impact on student academic achievement is made when families engage in learning activities that reflect the work children do in school, he said, noting that "the summer break is an excellent opportunity for parents to reinforce their children's learning and help prepare them for the year ahead."

Here are ten tips to help children have enjoyable educational summer experiences:

## Open a book

Children who don't read during the summer lose an average of three months of reading growth. But children who read gain about a month, said Dick Allington, a professor of literacy studies and one of the nation's leading authorities on summer reading loss.

"Imagine you're a hockey coach and your players go all summer and they're never on the ice. Do you expect them to come back in the fall playing the same way?" he said. "It's the same with reading."

Allington noted that 80 percent of the reading [achievement gap](#) between middle- to upper-income children and economically disadvantaged children accumulates during the summer. He encourages parents to regularly buy books for their children or borrow them from the library.

## **Join a summer reading club**

Devereaux noted that local libraries and bookstores often have summer reading programs. Children can track the number of books read and amount of time spent reading to accumulate points and qualify for prizes. If age-appropriate, children chart progress themselves. The programs are often free and they frequently have incentives to help get children started on reading during the summer.

## **Journal daily**

Encourage children to write in a personal journal each day during the summer. Allow them to be creative and also give them journal prompts. Include questions like "In what ways are snowflakes like people?" "Are you more like thunder or lightning?" and "If you could be an ocean animal, which one would you be and why?"

Promote the correct use of grammar and monitor spelling mistakes by using the dictionary and thesaurus.

## **Write a pen pal**

Whether your child has a friend who has moved or one right next door,

suggest that they become pen pals. They will enjoy writing letters and sharing ideas and experiences during the summer. Encourage them to write about topics that interest them, such as video games, sports, and vacations.

## **Get a magazine subscription**

Subscribe to an age-appropriate magazine centered around your children's activities and interests. Do not pick the magazine for them. Instead, encourage them to be part of the search process. Since magazine subscriptions tend to extend beyond the summer months, they can impact children positively for an entire year.

## **Play learning games**

Games can be simple ones that you make up and play with your child. You also can buy learning games online and in educational stores. Many games that are just for fun can be turned into learning games with a simple variation. Be creative. Even simple things like doing the dishes, playing ring toss, or buying groceries can be used as a fun lesson.

## **Enroll children in a summer math program**

Summer learning programs can be very convenient and flexible. Children should have time to play during the summer, but their brains should also be kept active. A good program will allow flexibility in time schedules as well as a customized learning process with which both you and your child will be comfortable.

## **Take educational family trips**

Camping, taking a nature hike, and visiting a local zoo or museum are all

educational family trips. Children can exercise their brain muscles by taking time to point out animals, plants, and exhibits. If there are information plaques or guides, read those with your child. Better yet, have your child can read them to you.

## **Use a tutor**

Enlist the help of a tutor who can make learning fun in a one-on-one interactive environment.

"This ensures a consistent educational enrichment and prevents the loss of skills that were hard earned the previous school year," Devereaux said.

## **Keep it fun!**

It shouldn't all be about worksheets or reviewing flashcards. [Children](#) also should go swimming, ride their bikes, and play baseball.

"Physical activity is important for developing well-rounded kids," Devereaux said. "It contributes to their overall health as well as their ability to focus."

Provided by University of Tennessee at Knoxville

Citation: Experts offer tips to prevent children's learning loss during summer (2013, June 12) retrieved 14 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-06-experts-children-loss-summer.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.