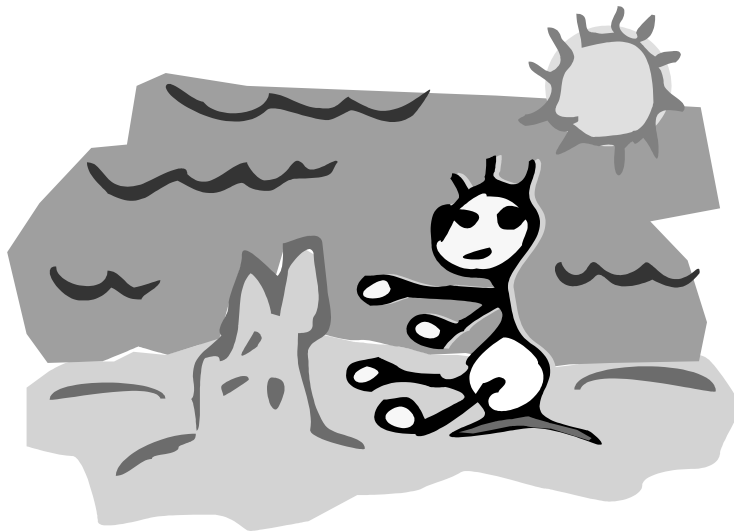


Summer – a time for fun, exercise, and especially learning. How will you provide balance for your children?

### Your Plan for Summer Learning

Once spring break is past it is a rapid slide into summer – summer camps, summer trips, summer school, summer learning, summer fun. I am told that many of the best summer camps are filled right after the first of the year. That’s your reminder to plan ahead for the kinds of experiences you want for your children.



Use the following checklist to inventory the needs of your children:

- Artistic
- Athletic
- Basic skills for school
- New academic skills, e.g., another language
- Outdoor adventure and survival
- Getting a job
- Caring for animals
- Social skills, e.g., dancing, modeling
- Travel
- Others \_\_\_\_\_

This list can get your started thinking about beneficial areas for your children. Plan something of high interest and something that will improve their learning success, e.g., a program of reading significant books. Some libraries sponsor summer reading and discussion groups. Check the ERIC web site

(<http://eric.indiana.edu>) for lists of books aimed at a variety of interests and ages.

### Balance the summer program

If your children want an athletic camp or activity, balance that experience with art or learning that will build their intellectual skills,

e.g., a short course in vocabulary development, or how to study, or how to manage time. Camps and courses take children away from the home, and you can find many of them available, if that suits you and your children best.

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## Home Learning

You can also give your children a very full summer without leaving home. Here are a number of ways that you can provide a variety of summer learning activities right in your own neighborhood.

### Athletics

- Play on baseball teams organized by the city parks department or the “Y”.
- Sign up for tennis lessons at the local park.
- Join a swim club or go swimming together once a week.
- Participate in youth golf lessons.

### Arts and Crafts

- Rotate art and crafts activities in the neighborhood with parents and grandparents teaching their favorite art form.
- Sign up for a program sponsored by a local hobby store.
- Hold monthly neighborhood art exhibits so children can display their work.



### Basic Skills

- Spend 30-60 minutes three times a week on learning or reviewing to carry your children smoothly into the next school year – vocabulary, phonics, spelling, math, writing and grammar. (See page 7)
- Challenge the thinking and research skills of your children by having them work together on a theme,

e.g., traveling through South America. (See sample titles on page 7)

- Learn to play a musical instrument and practice to get into the school band or orchestra.

### Expansive Learning

- Take day trips and have your children make notes or keep a journal. Hold follow-up discussions.
- Write a progressive story with other children in the neighborhood. Pass the story house to house or take turns adding to the story on the computer. Each person adds another page or an incident to the story. Maybe they can all come together to write the concluding event.
- Watch a high interest TV program on the Discovery Channel or on Animal Planet. Then discuss how the world has changed because of the story that they have watched.

Then discuss how the world has changed because of the story that they have watched.

- Organize a neighborhood reading club. Ask your librarian for suggestions.

### Social Learning

- Regularly visit an elderly neighbor, just to talk or to do simple chores.
- Visit a convalescent center and read or tell a joke to six or eight people.
- Work with a religious club or service agency to do work for needy people.
- Organize a group of kids to clean up a section of the neighborhood.
- Do a cooperative learning project on a theme that interests several neighborhood children. (See page 7)

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## A Plea!

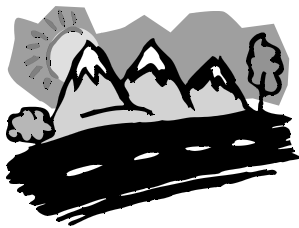
Don't allow your children to waste their summer sitting in front of the TV or simply playing games on the computer. Those may be pleasant diversions, but they will not send your children back to school with refreshed minds and sharpened skills. That takes planning.

## Learning Activities To Prevent Loss

The loss of skills over the summer is such a serious problem that educators call on parents to work to prevent summer loss. Instead of letting kids slide into a ravine of inactivity, you need to build a bridge of activities that will link the work of one year with the next.

You can develop bridge activities for your children – fun activities that also serve the purpose of maintaining their skills. Here are a few easy ones to get your children started:

- Make a weekly trip to the library for at least one book.
- Write a weekly letter to a relative or friend.
- Keep a weekly expense record on spending allowance or grocery.



## Parents Build Attitudes

A significant aspect of your summer plan is to build attitudes that have long-term benefits for your children. For example:

- Practice is necessary for success.
- Having a plan or purpose clarifies work.
- Working hard briefly over time brings many rewards.

Showing your children the benefits of time management and having a focus while working may be the two most important work habits that you can communicate to them. Though these ideas do not come easily to elementary school children, the concepts gradually sink in if you are persistent and build these ideas into your incentives. You will do wonders for your children during these summer activities if you remember to:

- Start on time; finish on time.
- Make a list of tasks and check them off as completed.
- Praise progress and reward the children who can explain the purpose of tasks.
- Ask regularly: “What’s important to learn today?”

If you prefer video demonstrations of strategies for reading comprehension, book talks, spelling, writing, or working with theme units, call ERIC’s help line and ask for a list or description of those that are available. These videos were developed specifically for parents who want to help their children. (1-800-759-4723)

One-year subscription to **Parent Talk** \$18<sup>00</sup>  
**Parent Talk** is also available for distribution to parents in packages of 25: \$15<sup>00</sup>

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## Parent Talk

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### Get Grandparents into the Act

Ask your children to write a weekly letter to their grandparents. Grandparents have a natural interest in and pride of their grandchildren. Most of them will respond to letters from grandchildren – either in writing or with a telephone call. For your children, the letters to grandparents can act as a means for summarizing their weekly activities and what they are learning week-by-week. Prompt the grandparents to ask for these letters and, of course, to respond to them.

For younger children, set up a pattern that they can follow so they know how to get started. You may wish to set this pattern for your children:

Dear Grandma,

- 1) This is the most interesting thing I did this week.
- 2) I learned these things.
- 3) What did you learn this week?

Love, Sammy

This pattern not only focuses attention on learning, but it also requests a similar response from Grandma or Grandpa. The same pattern could be used in writing to a friend or any other relative.

### Writing Opens the Door to Spelling, Vocabulary, and Grammar

Unless your children ask for help in spelling and grammar when writing their letters, don't focus the letter-writing exercise on those elements. Just encourage your children to write and to enjoy their communication. If they have questions, help them, of course.

### Vocabulary

Writing points to the need for a vocabulary that enables one to express ideas clearly. To be clear, a writer also has to spell accurately or the reader will stumble over the message and will make fun of the writer. No one wants that. The same is true for

grammar. In keeping with the theme of writing regular letters, therefore, you have a natural opening to ask your child to keep spelling, grammar, and vocabulary skills sharp. Thirty minutes, three times a week will do wonders in maintaining interest and sharpness in these writing skills.

### Spelling and Grammar

Build spelling practice into your weekly routine. Here are a few hints on how to make spelling interesting for your children:

- Give them a stack of 3x5 cards. As they write, ask them to put troublesome words on a card. Each week you can review those words with them. If they are using e-mail to write their letters, they may prefer to keep those troublesome words in a separate file on the computer.
- On an old rolodex file have your children make their own spelling and vocabulary dictionary. Each special word can be placed in alphabetical order with a definition that was appropriate for the letter in which it was written. Vocabulary building can also follow this rolodex file approach.
- Use a spelling workbook. Most spelling activity books are organized to provide independent activity for students in fifteen minute bursts. Therefore, they make easy-to-administer activities several days a week, if that is the kind of work your child needs.
- Use a grammar handbook. If you or your child's teacher have identified specific grammatical rules that would benefit your child's work, assign regular exercises in a grammar activity book. Otherwise have a grammar handbook available to answer questions. (See page 7 for resources)
- Circle and correct. As you read your child's letters and compositions, simply circle the words, phrases, or sentences that are not clear or that contain errors. Ask your child to correct the problem. If he does, congratulate him. If he does not, direct him to the solution.

## 4 Easy Steps to Summer Learning

Summer activities for your children need not be complex, but you do need a simple plan because you want the activities to work. Take these easy steps and you will have a plan for success:

You may want to paste this sheet on your bulletin board or refrigerator for daily reference.

### STEP 1. Set a schedule.

Children and adults function more effectively with structure – structure in time and in routines. For example, you should designate a daily time for learning because then everyone knows that time has been reserved. Usually an hour a day is sufficient time for summer maintenance of skills. You may want to split that time into two thirty-minute periods. For example,

8:30 a.m. Write a letter to Grandparents or other writing activity.

9:00 a.m. Review spelling and grammar.

8:00 p.m. Discuss reading or other learning with family

With a week-long planning sheet, you can provide a general structure for all the weeks of the summer, except family vacation weeks. It is organized so a daycare provider can direct the morning session, and the working parents can have a discussion or review in the evening – a discussion that makes them an integral part of ongoing activities.

For information on planners, see the web site [www.kidscanlearn.com](http://www.kidscanlearn.com).



### STEP 2. Reserve a space for learning.

Part of the psychology of developing good work habits is to have a place where work is performed. Children go to school where the environment is organized for school work. You may go to a store or an office where you know that work is expected of you. The same is true for children. When they sit at a certain table or desk, they understand that it is time to do work.

A work space for school-type activities requires a table for writing, perhaps a computer, paper, pencils, dictionary, similar books, and materials that make the statement: “When you sit here, you work have to do.” The library, for instance, may substitute for a work space. But don’t expect your children to concentrate on reading and writing while they are sitting in front of the TV or when the rest of the house is rocking with the noise and loud beat of rock-n-roll. Those are not work-friendly environments.

Your children cannot succeed in school work (or any work, for that matter) unless they can focus and have a place where they can read and work in peace.

### STEP 3. Collect learning materials.

You and your children need books and materials to guide summer learning. For your own sanity, select materials that actually help organize the time and create learning expectations.

A writing journal, for example, allows your children to write about certain topics and share the writing with others. A journal called “My Galaxy,” encourages children to ask grandparents and other family members to write about events in their lives. The journal

*Continued on Page 6*

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becomes a vehicle for interacting with people who are important to the child and gives them a common story to discuss and to refer to.

For primary grade children, some may need the help of read-along voices. You may want to explore short stories in audio books for that purpose. See a description of audio books on page 7. Written summaries of book chapters could become letters to grandparents, keeping them abreast of what your child is reading.

You might encourage an active participation of grandparents by sending them a copy of a book of letters from grandparents to grandchildren, for example, "With Love, Grandma," Family Learning Association, 2000.

Theme learning units could be a way for you to organize activities for an entire month, even an entire summer. Think for a moment about the theme: "Erosion takes many forms." You could spend as little as one week, or several weeks, reading, learning vocabulary, learning science and social studies, writing and making a presentation on erosion. Theme guide books are available in libraries, bookstores and supermarkets. Also see the website ([www.kidscanlearn.com](http://www.kidscanlearn.com)) or call for information at 1-800-759-4723.

**STEP 4. Build incentives into your summer activities.**

Naturally you will praise your children for their effort in learning. It is even more productive to build incentives, such as the following:

- As soon as a letter to Grandma is finished, put a stamp on it and mail it. Don't let it sit around.
- Post drawings or short responses to a book on a bulletin board or refrigerator.
- When your child finishes a particularly difficult task, play a board game or offer a treat.
- Upon completion of a theme unit or long learning task, go to the library or bookstore for a fun read.
- Always complete a learning task before playing because your child then learns that playtime and work time have distinct purposes. That's the reason that summer bridge work is best scheduled early in the day. A short review period at the end of the day enables you to show your interest and to communicate your love. It also enables you to adjust the bridge activities as you see the need.

### Adjust for Child's Age

Certainly, each of these steps needs to be adjusted to the age and development of your children. Please remember, too, that summer activities are not meant to be a punishment or to replace a summer school catch-up program. You are maintaining the skills your children achieved and helping them to move with confidence into the work of the next school year.

If a day care provider is involved in helping you with summer learning, it is especially important that you use books and workbooks that lay out clear lessons for daily work. Use books that are different from the ones that your children used during the school year.



# Resources

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## Improving Your Child's Writing Skills

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Using actual children's compositions, this fun guidebook takes kids through the entire process of writing, from Pre-Writing and Drafting to Revising and Proofreading. Practical worksheets are included to hone the skills of young writers. Gives parents a basic strategy for helping their children become more effective writers at school and in the workplace. PM-158-2021. \$14.95

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# Plan Summer Learning Activities

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- How to involve the whole family in reading and writing
- Tips for building vocabulary and grammar
- How to make games from learning activities
- How to encourage regular journal-keeping practices
- Rewards and incentives for developing good habits
- FREE Grammar Handbook (page 7)

These topics, plus book reviews and resource information are found within. Distribute this issue to the parents in your school. You may duplicate these eight pages or contact the Family Learning Association for a quantity purchase. Parent Talk bulletins are available in packs of 25. Renew your subscription now. Call 1-800-759-4723 or mail in order form.

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