Parent Tips: Summer Reading

The summer is a wonderful time for children to read what they most enjoy, to learn new things, and to have fun! Summer reading is also an important way to prevent kids from losing too much ground over the summer — research shows that summer reading can make a significant difference in a student’s overall academic achievement, particularly when she begins a new school year in the fall.

As a parent, there are a number of things you can do to encourage your child to read and to develop strong reading and writing skills over the summer. Here’s a list of summer reading.

At home

**Make time for reading**
During the busy summer months, it can be hard for you and your child to find a chance to read. Set aside a quiet time each day for reading, and remember to include "reading time" when planning summer activities. **Keep different kinds of reading materials at home**
To stimulate reading at home, keep reading materials throughout the house, including newspapers, magazines, and brochures. Keep some fun things on hand too, like word games, puzzles, or the kids' section of the newspaper. This will increase your child's access to books and printed material, providing more opportunities to practice reading.

**Beat boredom with books**
Help your child find books that she finds interesting — especially on rainy days! These might include non-fiction books, fun fact books, arts and crafts books, hands-on activity and project books, or cookbooks with kid-friendly recipes.

**Read aloud every day**
Try to find time each day to read aloud to your children — even the older ones. Reading aloud benefits children and teens, particularly those who are struggling readers. Read aloud in different places, from the porch to the park. And don't be afraid to use silly voices and act out the story!

**Encourage your child to learn new words**
Introduce your child to new words every day. Talk about what these words mean and how they are used.

**Write away**
Keep writing materials handy such as pencils, paper, and crayons so that your child can practice writing. Encourage her to write letters or post cards to friends and relatives over the summer, to keep a journal, make a summer scrapbook, or to write stories and poems. Ask your child to help you when making shopping lists or copying a recipe.

At the library

**Help your child get a library card**
Getting your child her own library card will make her feel special, and will motivate her to use her library card to check out books or other items. Make sure she understands the library's return policy.

**Visit the library frequently and look for summer reading programs**
Libraries can be magical places during the summer, and they often have summer reading programs, book clubs, and events for kids like puppet shows or storyteller presentations. They also may provide age-appropriate summer reading lists. Check the library calendar for special events throughout the summer.

**Help your child select books at the right level**
A good way to decide whether your child is reading books at the right reading level is to have her read a from a page in the book that she has chosen (any page but the first page). If she is reading smoothly and understands what she is reading, the book is probably at a good level for her. If she makes five or more errors in a passage of about 50 words, the level may be too challenging. Librarians can also help you choose books at the appropriate level for your children.
Allow your child to choose what he reads
Allow your child to choose her own reading material, including popular fiction, magazines, graphic novels, and comic books. Summer is a time when children can discover the joys of reading, and they will be more motivated if they are reading something they enjoy. If you are concerned about the content of what your child is reading, talk with her about his interests and set some guidelines for appropriate choices.

Find magazines that interest your child
Magazines are a great way for kids to practice reading, to learn new things, and to develop their vocabulary. You may be able to find your child's favorite magazine at the public library, or you can get a subscription at your home.

Great summer reading habits

Be a reading role model
Make sure your child sees you reading and writing, whether it's reading the morning newspaper or making a shopping list. Talk with your child about what you are currently reading, and about books you read as a child. Turn off the TV for some quiet reading time. Seeing that reading is an important part of your life will help children understand that reading can be an important part of theirs.

Keep it fun
Don't set rules about reading for a certain amount of time or reading a minimum number of pages, and don't make reading a punishment — keep it fun so that it's something that your child wants to keep doing!

Talk about what your child is reading
Talk about the books you and your child have read together — what you liked, what you didn't like, or who your favorite character was. Ask your child to tell you about what she is reading. Libraries may also offer book discussion groups for children, or online book chats with authors.

Give your child a chance to read aloud to you
Reading aloud will give your child the opportunity to practice his reading skills. Encourage rereading of favorite books she can read easily. For older kids, ask them to read you things that are interesting to them, such as the newspaper sports page, a detective novel, or a music magazine.

Listen to audio books
If you will be spending a lot of time in the car or at home, rent books on tape or CD from the library, and listen to them together. This can also be a great way to encourage language development, or to encourage children to enjoy stories.

Connect books to summer activities and travel
Read books related to your summer activities and trips. For example, you might read a book about dinosaurs after visiting a natural history museum, or a story about sand castles while at the beach. Helping your child connect books with her own experiences will build her vocabulary and will make her experiences more meaningful.

By encouraging your children to engage in summer reading activities, you will help them find lots of fun ways to use reading throughout the summer while keeping their reading skills in good shape!