

Getting Ready for Summer!

(www.readingrockets.org/article/get-ready-summer-ideas-teachers-share-families)

ideas for summer learning, fun



Check out Reading Rockets' new summer website, **Start with a Book** (<http://www.startwithabook.org>). You'll find a treasure trove of themed children's books, parent-child activities, and other great resources for summer learning.

Offer recommendations for active learning experiences.

Check with your local department of parks and recreation about camps and other activities. Find out what exhibits, events, or concerts are happening in our town over the summer. Create a directory or calendar of local summer learning to share with your students and their families. (Be sure to note any costs involved.)

Encourage parents to build reading and writing into everyday activities. Some ideas to pass along: (1) watching TV with the sound off and closed captioning on, (2) reading directions for how to play a new game, or (3) helping with meals by writing up a grocery list, finding things in the grocery store, and reading the recipe aloud for mom or dad during cooking time. More ideas at **PBS Parents**

(<http://www.pbs.org/parents/readinglanguage/quicktips/main.html>) (in Spanish, too).

Summer trading cards. Kids can dive deeper into summer reading by exploring characters with the **Trading Cards activity** (<http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/activities-projects/summer-trading-cards-30864.html>) from ReadWriteThink, which provides students with the opportunity to expand their understanding of the reading by creating new storylines and characters. A nifty **Trading Card interactive tool** (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/character-trading-cards-0056.html>) provides additional support.

Encourage writing. Give each of your students a stamped, addressed postcard so they can write to you about their summer adventures. Or recycle school notebooks and paper into summer journals or scrapbooks. Another way to engage young writers is to encourage your students to spend some time researching and writing **community stories** — not only does it build research and writing skills, but helps kids develop a deeper sense of place. And check out the **pen pal project**

(<http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/health/1009-mix-learning-and-fun-for-kids-with-special-needs.gs?page=1>) at Great Schools. Find more good **summer writing ideas**

(<http://www.startwithabook.org/summer-writing>) from Start with a Book: keep a nature journal, create a poetree, share a recipe, or keep a scrapbook of reviews of summer adventures

Kids blog! Arrange for a safe, closed community so that your students can blog over the summer. **Edublogs** (<http://edublogs.org/>) and **Kidblog** (<http://kidblog.org/home/>) offer teachers and students free blog space and appropriate security. **Free, disposable e-mail accounts** (<http://www.mailinator.com/>) are available at Mailinator. Students can create an account there, use the address long enough to establish the blog and password, and then abandon it.

Be an active citizen. Kids who participate in community service activities gain not only new skills but self-confidence and self-esteem. Help them zoom into action! Resources from **ZOOM** (<http://pbskids.org/zoom/activities/action/index.html>) can help them get the most out of helping others this summer.

Active bodies. Active minds. First Lady Michele Obama is leading the national Let's Move initiative — with the goal of raising a healthier generation of children. **Let's Move Outside** (<http://www.letsmove.gov/lets-move-outside>) has lots of ideas to help kids get the 60 minutes of active play they need everyday. **At Your Library** (<http://www.atyourlibrary.org/fun-outdoor-games-and-ways-create-your-own>) has suggestions for fun outdoor games — everything from the classics (remember Capture the Flag?) to how to invent your own, plus a list of books that will inspire you to "let the games begin."

Get into geocaching. Everyone loves a scavenger hunt! Get in on the latest outdoor craze with geocaching, where families search for hidden "caches" or containers using handheld GPS tools (or a GPS app on your smart phone). Try a variation on geocaching called earthcaching where you seek out and learn about unique geologic features. Find more details about geocaching plus links to geocaching websites in this article from the School Family website, **Geocaching 101: Family Fun for All, in Every Season** (<http://www.schoolfamily.com/school-family-articles/article/10829-geocaching-101-family-fun-for-all-in-every-season>). Or follow one young family on their geocaching adventure: **Geocaching with Kids: The Ultimate Treasure Hunt** (<http://familysponge.com/play/family-adventures/geocaching-with-kids/>).

Watch a garden grow and build research, reading, and writing skills with this **summer project** (http://www.readwritethink.org/beyondtheclassroom/summer/gradesK_2/GardenWriting/) from ReadWriteThink. Children are encouraged to write questions and observations in a summer garden journal. Or check out the **Kids Gardening website** (<http://www.kidsgardening.org/>) for lots of great ideas and resources for family (and school) gardening.

Make cool things. "Dad, dad, dad, can we make a samurai sword?..." **Dad Can Do** (<http://www.dadcando.com/default.asp>) is a wonderful site full of crafty ideas that bring fathers and kids together. Make a wizard's wand, paper planes, spaceships, ex libris, and quirky things like an origami cowboy shirt (think Woody from "Toy Story") — mostly from inexpensive or recycled materials.

Real world books. Interesting Nonfiction for Kids (I.N.K.)

<http://inkrethink.blogspot.com/>) introduces kids to writers who are presenting nonfiction in new and engaging ways. For more book ideas to share with parents, check out the **Orbis Pictus Award** (<http://www.ncte.org/awards/orbispictus>) winners — outstanding nonfiction for children, presented by the National Council of Teachers of English. Share these tip sheets with parents (available in English and Spanish): **Getting the Most Out of Nonfiction Reading Time** (<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/55348>) and **How to Read Nonfiction Text** (<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/47164>).

Suggest to parents that they set up a summer listening program which encourages their children to **listen to written language**

(<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/15904>). Research shows that some children with learning disabilities profit from reading the text and listening to it at the same time.