Summer Learning Spotlight

Reading

Early Childhood/ Elementary School Summer 2026

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You can find countless opportunities to read and write with your child this summer, no matter where you are. Here's how to boost comprehension, vocabulary, writing skills and more—in the library, at the park, in the kitchen—all while enjoying summer fun.

Plan to enjoy reading in many fun ways at the library

Visiting the library together regularly shows your child that reading is important to your family. It also ensures a steady supply of appealing reading material. To add excitement to library visits:

- **Check the calendar of events.** Plan to attend a story hour or puppet show with a younger child. Sign an older child up for a summer book club. Children of all ages will enjoy book-related crafts and contests.
- **Start a list of topics** family members are curious about and add to it throughout the summer. On library visits, let your child choose one to learn about.
- **Have your child introduce** visiting relatives and friends to your local library. Your child can lead a tour of the different sections and point out favorite reading spots. If you visit relatives, ask to see their library.
- **Look for nonfiction "companions"** to fiction books your child likes, or vice versa. Talk about how the books are the same and different.
- **Enjoy a reading picnic** on the library grounds. Check out books, eat and then read together outside.
- **Let your child bring** a stuffed animal to the library and read to it. Suggest choosing a book featuring that animal.

Provide purposeful daily writing practice

Your child will be more motivated to practice writing this summer if there's a reason for doing it. To squeeze in a little writing each day—without making it feel like a chore:

- **Add writing to car games.** Find words on signs beginning with each letter of the alphabet, in order (*Atlanta, bus, caution*). Have your child write the words on paper. Or, have your child list out-of-state license plates your family spots. How many can you get before summer ends?
- **Write to each other.** Start a routine of slipping notes under each other's bedroom doors. Or, write in a shared journal. Each time you write to your child, include at least one or two words that may be unfamiliar.
- **Have your child add** to shopping lists that you post on the refrigerator.
- **Ask your child to put** requests in writing and back them up with reasons you should grant them.

Collect new words from summer reading

To encourage careful reading and vocabulary-building, help your child become a word collector. Have your elementary schooler:

1. **Choose three** unfamiliar words from each book read this summer.
2. **Use clues** from the surrounding text to figure out each word's meaning, then look up the word in a dictionary to check for accuracy.
3. **Write each book's title,** the three words and their meanings on a sticky note. Post the notes a visible location. Or, your child could make a poster of book titles, words and definitions.
4. **Try to use** the words in conversations.

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Support comprehension with summer read-alouds

Enrich daily reading time with these strategies for improving reading comprehension. To help your child understand a book:

- **Build on your child's existing knowledge** of a book's genre, topic or setting. Before reading a fable, point out that it will teach a lesson. If a nonfiction book is about space travel, discuss what you and your child know about the subject. If a story takes place long ago, you might talk about how people did things without today's technology.
- **Pause to explain meanings** of unfamiliar words. If you don't know a word, have your child look it up in a dictionary, and learn it together.
- **Encourage your child to ask** questions if something is confusing. Reread the sentence or paragraph and discuss it to help your child understand.
- **Talk about strategies you use** while you read, like visualizing a scene, predicting what might happen in the story or reading "between the lines" to figure out what the author means.
- **Read the same book** multiple times over several days. Discuss new things you notice and meanings that become clearer.
- **Help your child** think about the reading. Ask questions like "What does this remind you of?" and "What could the characters have done differently?"

Play with sounds

Help your child practice hearing and identifying individual sounds in words with these games that you can play anywhere you go:

- **Say three words,** two with the same beginning sound and one with a different sound (***a**pple, **a**lligator, **i**guana*). Ask your child, "Which word doesn't belong?" Repeat with ending sounds (*bea**ch**, spla**sh**, cou**ch***).
- **Secretly think of two** rhyming words, like *sand* and *band*. Say the first word and ask your child to swap the /s/ sound with /b/ to make the second word. You can also say a compound word like *sandcastle*. Can your child think of a word to replace one of the word's parts to make a new word? (*paper* for *castle*: *sandpaper*).

Mix words into summertime recipes

Hot days call for cool recipes—and for reading and writing. Help your child practice "how-to" writing:

1. **Together, list** "summer-y" ingredients like watermelon, corn and tomatoes.
2. **List verbs used in recipes** (*stir, chop, sprinkle*). Talk about their meanings. Act them out to reinforce their meanings.
3. **Have your child use** the lists to write recipes for dishes such as smoothies, salads and cold sandwiches. Talk about the importance of including every step.
4. **Read the recipes** together as you prepare summer treats!

Enjoy hands-on writing activities

Using multiple senses while reading strengthens your child's memory of letters and words. It's helpful whether your child is learning the alphabet, high-frequency words (*because, their*), or academic vocabulary (*government, precipitation*). To give your child a feel for writing:

- **Let your child "write"** with a finger on textured surfaces like brick, sandpaper and bubble wrap. Take turns writing and guessing what the other person wrote.
- **Suggest that your child dip** a paintbrush in water and "paint" letters and words on a sidewalk on a hot day. Together, watch the letters evaporate.
- **Help your child look up** a recipe for slime. Make it together and form letters and words with it.
- **Encourage your child to write** in the air by gesturing with one arm. Help your child visualize the letters and words by asking playfully, "What color ink are you writing with?"
- **Allow your child to use** a finger to write on a steamy window or bathroom mirror.

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