

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



May 2011

Sherman Elementary School
Family Resource Center

Rev up reading on lazy summer days

Long summer days are approaching. And they're a perfect opportunity to add some spice to your regular reading routine while keeping your child's skills sharp for next school year.

To make the most of reading this summer, be sure to:

- **Schedule regular library visits.** Think about topics that appeal to your child. Ask the librarian to help you find books about them. And pick up a schedule, since libraries often offer special events for children.
- **Keep books handy** so you can read everywhere. See how many silly places you can find to read, like inside a blanket fort or on the swings. Read on a walk, at bath time, during dinner and with relatives you visit. Schedule DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) time once a week.
- **Discuss what you read together.** Ask your child to summarize what happened. Find out her opinion of the story. What was her favorite part? What does she think happened after "the end"?
- **Keep track of summer fun** in a homemade scrapbook. Have your child draw pictures of her favorite activities. Let her dictate captions. Add photos, stories, mementos and other special features, such as a list of books you've enjoyed. Keep everything in a binder—and read it together!

Are you planning a family vacation or some day trips? Start your planning at the library. You and your child can find out about your destination. Check out some books with pictures. Then let your child be the "tour guide." Check out audio books, too, for long drives.



Enliven summer learning

Your child has worked hard in preschool all year, and you want him to retain what he's learned. But you also want summer to be relaxing. To combine learning and fun:

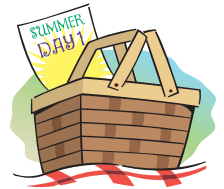
- **Answer** questions about science and nature. ("What if we mixed yellow and red paint?" "What kind of bug is that?")
- **Make** connections to history. Tell family stories about the past. Visit a museum. Talk about how the world has changed.

Source: D. Sullivan, "How to prepare your child for 1st grade," parentcenter, http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/0_how-to-prepare-your-child-for-1st-grade_67236.pc.

Create summer traditions

Children thrive on repetition, and rituals create memories. This summer, start a tradition:

- **Have** a picnic on the first day of summer—or the first day of each summer month.
- **Take** a monthly "theme walk." Wear silly hats or walk backwards to make it special.



Night, day teach about time

Teach your child the time concepts of *day* and *night*. First, talk about how things look in the daytime—it's bright; the sun is out. Talk about what happens in the daytime—your child goes to pre-school or plays outside.

When the sun is going down, tell your child, "The sun is setting. Soon it will be night." Talk about how things look at night—the moon and stars are out; it's dark outside. Discuss what happens at night—your child may put on his pajamas, brush his teeth and go to bed.



Inspire your child to think and question

Young children are naturally curious. Keep that curiosity alive to guide your child on a lifetime of learning. To do this:

- **Model being curious.** Wonder about things out loud. Try to find answers when you don't know something—and let your child help you look.
- **Encourage exploration.** Help your child use a small magnifying glass to examine things—bugs, flowers, newsprint, walls, carpet, dirt!
- **Ask questions.** Make a habit of asking your child "why?" questions. You can do this by turning his own questions back on him. If he asks, "Why are you getting your umbrella?" ask him, "Why do you think I am getting my umbrella?"

Source: Michael H. Popkin and others, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, ISBN: 1-880283-15-8, Active Parenting Publishers.



How can parents make the most of time in the car?

Q: My child's routine will be changing once preschool is out for the summer months. He will be traveling a greater distance to a home daycare near my work. It will be more travel than he is used to. How can I make this car time manageable—and maybe even productive?

A: Changing routines is challenging for young children. But look at this as an opportunity for you and your child to spend more time together. To make the most of the time with your child:

- **Continue your at-home routine.** Your child must stick to a reasonable bedtime if he is going to be getting up to commute with you. Get him in bed early enough to ensure at least 11 hours of sleep. Wake him up allowing enough time to eat breakfast and get ready.
- **Use travel time activities.** Use the time to tell your child a story. Put your child in charge of the traffic lights. It's his job to tell you when the light turns green. Have your child count blue cars and red trucks. Sing. Play rhyming games—say a one-syllable word and see if your child can find a rhyme for it.

Of course, remember safety first. If you're the driver, your first priority is to pay attention to your driving. If your child needs immediate attention, pull over to a safe place.



Are you encouraging independence?

Parents are naturally protective. But it's also important to let children explore the world. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're balancing your child's safety and freedom:

1. **Do you supervise** your preschooler's playtime with friends without hovering over them?
2. **Do you let** your child make simple choices? "Would you like to wear shorts or pants today?"
3. **Do you give** your child a chance to solve minor problems before stepping in to help?
4. **Do you play** with your child but also encourage her to play independently?

5. **Do you show** interest in your child's opinions?
How did you do? Each yes answer means you're encouraging independence. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed."
—Maria Montessori

Good manners still count

Even today, when so many of us are in such a hurry, good manners still matter.

But the only place your child is guaranteed to learn good manners is at home. So set a good example and keep practicing! Your child can learn to:

- **Say** the "magic words"—*please* and *thank you*.
- **Introduce** herself politely.
- **Shake** hands and say, "How are you?"
- **Know** when to say, "Excuse me."
- **Answer** the telephone.

Build healthy self-esteem

A strong sense of self-esteem is one of the best qualities you can nurture in your child to prepare him for school. It will allow him to accept that things sometimes go wrong, but realize that he is capable of trying again.

One easy way to build your child's self-esteem is to notice effort. A simple comment such as, "Wow, you are a hard worker!" can motivate him to keep trying.

Chores do more than share the load

Learning by doing helps your child's brain develop. To you, sorting socks may just be a laundry task. But when your child does it, she



is learning to compare and classify. Making dinner may just be a nightly duty. But when your child helps, she gets a mini-education. Setting the table helps her recognize patterns. Measuring ingredients helps her practice a key math skill. Even mixing a salad builds motor skills and a feeling of self-satisfaction in accomplishing a task.

Helping Children Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Erika Beasley. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2011, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1005