

Keep it Going...

Reading and writing through the summer!



Would you like a list of activities to support reading and writing throughout summer vacation? Pick the ideas that your child would enjoy and would work easily into your life. This list is appropriate for any age. Involve the entire family; it's more fun that way. Here's a hint...I saved my best idea for last, be sure to read to the end. Have a magnificent summer!

-My Favorite Book...

Make a list of each book your child reads. Have a little celebration after the first ten picture books or maybe three chapter books. (Whatever seems reasonable for your reader.) Have your child pick one favorite from that group and add it to another list, the favorites list. Then repeat with a different round of books. At the end of the summer, let your child pick the best from their favorites list. It's the book of the summer! Wouldn't it be fun to do this for several years? Then your child would have an all time favorites list. These would be the books they'd read to their children someday.

-The Best Place to Read

How many different places can you read a book? Under the dining room table, in the closet with a flashlight, sitting on top of the dryer, at the beach, in line at Disney, you get the idea. It might be fun to take a picture in each spot and put them together into a "Where is (fill in your child's name)?" book. Your child could write captions to go with each photo. If you make a list of "My Favorites" books, be sure to add that page to the book too.

-Reading in Bookstores

Children can read though picture books and easy readers with lightening speed. No one could afford to buy all the books that children can read. Add to that, libraries shelves can sometimes look empty during the summer. So...take advantage of book stores. Set aside a time regularly to visit your local book shop. Let your child pick a stack of books, find a quiet corner and read until their eyes get fuzzy. If you're looking for beginning readers, try teacher supply stores. Sometimes they have a better selection than even bookstores. Set limits with your child before you go about purchasing books. Will they get to buy a book? How many? Keeping the same rule throughout the summer helps make this an easy, pleasurable experience.

-Write Letters

Everyone loves to hear from their friends and family. Even if you live down the street from your best friend, it's still fun to get a message in the mail. Grandparents are usually enthusiastic about participating in letter writing fun. Teachers often respond too. It can be fun to get a supply of stickers, stamps, fun paper and glitter pens to personalize letters. Set a goal to write one letter a week!

-Cook Together

Have you ever stopped to think about how much reading and math you use when you cook? Directions, measurement, time, problem solving...plus it's fun too. Browse through cookbooks together, try new recipes and have your child write the grocery list. Cook side by side. Bon appétit!

-Organize a Book Club

Get together with other parents and organize a summer book club. Determine the purpose first. Will you be trading books? Will you read the same book and discuss? Decide on a schedule, who, where, and how long. It's always a good idea to have the "book talk" first with a little playtime afterwards. Book clubs are fun for children and parents!

-My Best Idea...A Secret Journal

Grab a writing journal, it could be a fancy one or just a spiral notebook. Date the first page and write your child a short letter. It might be nice to begin with reasons why you love them, just a few sentences. At the end, ask your child a question and encourage them to write you back. Tuck it under their pillow for them to find when they go to bed. If they ask you about it, tell them to write their answer on the next page and slip the journal under your pillow. The next step is to write another note, ask another question. Be sure to add dates each time. Don't feel the pressure to do this daily, let it happen naturally. You might find that it ebbs and flows. Exciting in the beginning, many days in a row, then fades for awhile. That's okay, go ahead and take breaks, just don't let it go forever.

What about the child who is just beginning to read and write? Perhaps parents could take turns helping with the reading and writing to the other parent. If you're a single parent, you can still do the reading for them after your child finds the journal. Have them draw pictures to respond. The fun, for now, will be in the finding and giving of the journal. But you're starting a tradition, a habit that will carry over when the message becomes more important.

How long can you keep this going? Wouldn't this be handy to have in place when your child is a teenager and things are sometimes hard to say, maybe easier to write? Wouldn't it be a priceless gift to have journals filled with dialogue between you and your child through the years?

Your time with your children is limited. Sometimes the minutes are endless, but the years go by almost instantly. Journals may help you keep a bit of who they are and who you were at that moment in time.