



Summer Activities for Building Kids' Language, Literacy, and Learning

This has been a difficult school year for just about everyone. And although you may be worried about your child's academic progress this year, all families desperately need a reset.

Give yourself a break this summer! Children build language, literacy, and learning skills through daily activities, so rest assured that this can be time well spent.

Here are 3 everyday activities that kids need more of this summer:

Reading. Use this time to nurture *joy* in reading. Let kids be in the driver's seat when it comes to choosing what they read so it doesn't feel like work. Many libraries that were closed due to COVID-19 are reopening or offering curbside book pickups and returns.

- **TIP:** Try introducing different types of books, from fairy tales to science fiction to poetry.
- **TIP:** Set aside time for independent reading. Read out loud together as well. Even older kids benefit from nightly reading together. Discuss what the story is about, what the characters are feeling, and what your child thinks will come next.

Outdoor play. Hands-on activities, no matter a child's age, are the best way to learn new skills, build vocabularies, and boost learning through the senses.

- **ACTIVITY IDEAS:** Take a nature walk and discuss the sights, smells, and sounds. Plant a garden, outside, or in containers: Research your options, shop for materials, and care for your garden daily. Plan a picnic—discuss your menu, where you'll go, and what you hope to see.

Quality time. Sure, many families have spent more time together than ever this year, but the quantity of this time has not always translated to quality.

- **TIP:** Focus on one or two daily opportunities for uninterrupted conversation and bonding. A morning or evening walk together, a device-free dinner (or breakfast or lunch!), or a nightly board game are some ideas.
- **RESOURCE:** Check out the Family Dinner Project (thefamilydinnerproject.org/) for some great suggestions for conversation starters.





Here are 3 things that kids may need less of this summer:

Screen time. For many kids, it's been a year of doing everything online: school, hobbies, and entertainment. They've also been exposed to a constant barrage of negative news about the pandemic and other issues on TV. Many children are experiencing online fatigue and stress.

- **TIP:** With school out, revisit boundaries around daily technology use. Talk to your kids about the effects of too much screen time, how they feel after being online for a long time, and other activities that they can do in place of screen use.

Formal work, workbooks, and "educational" programs/apps. Families may feel pressure to have their children engage in extra academic work over the summer, leading them to order workbooks or subscribe to online programs. However, everyday real-world activities and interaction are generally most effective.

- **DID YOU KNOW?** Play is one of the main ways that children learn, with direct benefits on cognitive skills, math, language, literacy, and much more.

Academic pressure and expectations. This year, even the youngest of children spent hours learning online—with ongoing technical challenges and little to no in-person interaction with peers and teachers.

- **TIP:** Although as parents you are understandably invested in your child's development and academic success, try to remain positive about where they are after a tough year.

For information on children's communication development, and building communication skills at home, visit www.asha.org/public.

