
**READY for SCHOOL Parent News:
Summer Tips for Reading, Writing and Arithmetic: Make Use of the Outside!**

For children, learning never stops. Summer is a great time to take advantage of the many ways that children can learn. Here are some ideas for maximizing summer learning, many taking place outdoors:

- **Take a blanket and books outside and place them in a shaded area for long periods of uninterrupted book reading.** Provide board books for the youngest learners and picture books for preschoolers. For older preschool children or school-age children, consider reading aloud a “chapter book” over the summer. *Charlotte’s Web* or *Stuart Little*, both by E. B. White, are classic favorites, but there are lots of others to choose from. Visit the Growing Readers site at <http://www.brighthorizons.com/growing/readers/index.aspx> for ideas on Books of Excellence.
- Maximize the potential of science experiences outdoors. **Offer frequent opportunities to enhance science skills through water and sand exploration.** A small covered sandbox outside on the grass or deck or a wash basin filled with water (or both!) can provide endless time for exploration. Add some plastic containers for dumping and filling and molding. You can also experiment with freezing and melting by making popsicles out of fruit juice.
- **Summer also lends itself to outdoor gardens.** Plant vegetable and/or flower gardens and children can learn responsibility through weeding and watering. They can also keep a journal with pictures and/or words of plant, flower and vegetable growth.
- **The outdoors lends itself well to strengthening the math skills of weighing and measuring.** For example, ask “Which is heavier - this stone or this stone?” Or measure the length and width of the sandbox or garden with sticks or hands or feet and record your child’s measurements.
- **Give children a disposable camera for taking pictures on their weekends or vacation.** When the pictures are ready, encourage your child to tell you something about each picture. You can write down what he says, or if he is older, he can write his own words with your help and with invented spelling. If you are feeling ambitious, make a simple book together with the pictures and captions.

Be creative, and don’t forget all the fun ways to prepare children for academic excellence during the summer, outdoors and indoors.