

## Helpful and Creative websites!

(updated 3/22/12)



Here are some addresses for safe and appropriate websites for you and your children to peruse. Some navigation might be necessary to find suitable ideas and/or activities that will engage your children!

<http://www.sandwich.lib.il.us/>

<http://www.raz-kids.com/>

<http://www.spellingcity.com/>

<http://www.starfall.com/>

<http://pbskids.org/games/reading.html>

<http://pbskids.org/lions/>

<http://www.readwritethink.org/>

<http://www.kaboose.com/>

<http://www.kinderart.com/>

<http://www.preschoolbystormie.com/>

[http://www.education.com/magazine/article/Summer\\_Science\\_Activities/](http://www.education.com/magazine/article/Summer_Science_Activities/)

<http://www.activitiesforkids.com/teacher.htm>

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/activities/>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/>

We also wanted to let you know that we are once again promoting summer reading and the use of the 'Find-a-Book' website at <http://lexile.com/findabook> as a resource toward that effort. As you may know, one review of the impact of summer reading found that children can lose up to 60 percent of their skills during a two-month vacation. Reading during the summer months, however, can sustain those gains and ensure students are better prepared when they return to school in the fall.



## Get Ready for Summer! Ideas for Teachers to Share with Families

By: Reading Rockets (2011)

Reading Rockets has packed a "virtual beach bag" of activities for teachers to help families get ready for summer and to launch students to fun, enriching summertime experiences. Educators will find materials to download and distribute as well as ideas and resources to offer to students and parents to help ensure summer learning gain rather than loss.

### In this article:

- [Ideas for summer learning fun](#)
- [Ideas for summer reading fun](#)
- [Online activities for families](#)
- [Print and share with parents](#)
- [Print and share with kids](#)

The school bell may stop ringing, but summer is a great time for all kinds of learning opportunities for kids. Reading Rockets packed this beach bag full of activities for teachers to help families get ready for summer and to launch students to fun, enriching summertime experiences.

In the beach bag you'll find materials you can download and distribute, but you'll also find ideas for things that you may want to gather and offer to students and parents and for connections you'll want to make to help ensure summer learning gain rather than loss.

---

## Ideas for summer learning fun

---

**Offer recommendations for active learning experiences.** Check with your local department of parks and recreation about camps and other activities. Find out what exhibits, events, or concerts are happening in your town over the summer. Create a directory or calendar of local summer learning fun to share with your students and their families. (Be sure to note any costs involved.)

**Encourage parents to build reading and writing into everyday activities.** Some ideas to pass along: (1) watching TV with the sound off and closed captioning on, (2) reading directions for how to play a new game, or (3) helping with meals by writing up a grocery list, finding things in the grocery store, and reading the recipe aloud for mom or dad during cooking time. More ideas at [PBS Parents](#) (in Spanish, too) and [ReadWriteThink](#).

**Encourage writing.** Give each of your students a stamped, addressed postcard so they can write to you about their summer adventures. Or recycle school notebooks and paper into summer journals or scrapbooks. Another way to engage young writers is to encourage your students to spend some time researching and writing **community stories** — not only does it build research and writing skills, but helps kids develop a deeper sense of place. And check out the [pen pal project](#) at Schwab Learning.

**Everyone's blogging!** Arrange for a safe, closed community so that your students can blog over the summer. [Edublogs](#) offers teachers and students free blog space and appropriate security. Students will need an e-mail address in order to create an account. [Free, disposable e-mail accounts](#) are available at Mailinator. Students can create an account there, use the address long enough to establish the blog and password, and then abandon it. Or have parents check out [SparkTop](#) (originally created by Schwab Learning) for blogging and other writing opportunities.

**Be an active citizen.** Kids who participate in community service activities gain not only new skills but self-confidence and self-esteem. Help them zoom into action! Resources from [ZOOM](#) can help them get the most out of helping others this summer.

**Active bodies. Active minds.** First Lady Michele Obama is leading the national Let's Move initiative — with the goal of raising a healthier generation of children. [Let's Move Outside](#) has lots of ideas to help kids get the 60 minutes of active play they need everyday. [At Your Library](#) has suggestions for fun outdoor games — everything from the classics (remember Capture the Flag?) to how to invent your own, plus a list of books that will inspire you to "let the games begin."

**Watch a garden grow** and build research, reading, and writing skills with this [summer project](#) from ReadWriteThink. Children are encouraged to write questions and observations in a summer garden journal.

**Make cool things.** "Dad, dad, dad, can we make a samurai sword?..." [Dad Can Do](#) is a wonderful site full of crafty ideas that bring fathers and kids together. Make a wizard's wand, paper planes, spaceships, ex libris, and quirky things like an origami cowboy shirt (think Woody from "Toy Story") — mostly from inexpensive or recycled materials.

**Looking for more than just a movie?** The [Kids Off the Couch](#) website takes what kids love — good films, books, music and digital media — and uses it to inspire family adventures.

**Help parents plan ahead for fall.** Work with the teachers a grade level above to develop a short list of what their new students have to look forward to when they return to school. For example, if rising third graders will be studying ancient cultures, suggest that parents check out educational TV, movies, or local museums that can provide valuable background information on that topic.

## Ideas for summer reading fun

---

**Make sure kids have something to read during the summer** — put books into children's hands. **Register** with First Book and gain access to award-winning new books for free and to deeply discounted new books and educational materials or **find** other national and local programs and organizations that can help.

**Get your local public library to sign kids up for summer reading before school is out.** Invite or ask your school librarian to coordinate a visit from the children's librarian at the public library near the end of the school year. Ask them to talk about summer activities, educational videos, and audio books at the library and to distribute summer reading program materials.

**Get to know your community public library better.** Find out if your public library is part of the Collaborative Summer Library Program, a grassroots effort to provide high-quality summer reading programs for kids. The theme for 2011 is **One World, Many Stories**. Colorín Colorado has tips for parents **in English** and **in Spanish** about visiting the local library. Or check out our top 9 reasons to **rediscover your public library**.

**Let parents and kids know about the free summer reading incentive programs.** The **Scholastic Summer Challenge** encourages kids to log the minutes they spend reading and the 20 schools with the most minutes logged will receive recognition in the 2012 Scholastic Book of World Records. Kids can participate in weekly challenges, earn digital rewards and enter sweepstakes to win prizes. Look for WordGirl, the national "Ambassador of Summer Reading," to make appearances at reading events across the country. The **iVillage PBS Kids Summer Reading Community Challenge** runs from June 6 to July 15 and will feature free literacy-building resources for parents and children. Guest "coaches" include cast members and characters from PBS Kids shows.

**Help kids build math and science skills over the summer.** Share our **Literacy in the Sciences series** with families. Each one-page tip sheet (in English and Spanish) suggests easy hands-on activities as well as fiction and nonfiction books to extend the learning. Encourage parents to find out if their community is involved with **NASA's Summer of Innovation** project — which provides grants and teaching resources for summer school programs to introduce kids in grades 4–9 to science through problem-based activities. The project focuses on reaching kids who are traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields.

**Encourage parents to start a neighborhood book club** with other families this summer. It's a great way to keep the summer learning social and low-key. Warmer weather can inspire some not-so-run-of-the-mill meeting places, too: a tent or picnic blanket in the backyard. If the book club catches on, it's something to continue throughout the school year. PBS Parents has a wonderful collection of **tips on how to start a club** and encourage great discussions.

**Real world books. Interesting Nonfiction for Kids (I.N.K.)** introduces kids to writers who are presenting nonfiction in new and engaging ways. For more book ideas to share with parents, check out the **Orbis Pictus Award** winners — outstanding nonfiction for children, presented by the National Council of Teachers of English.

**Suggest to parents that they set up a summer listening program** which encourages their children to **listen to written language**. Research shows that some children with learning disabilities profit from reading the text and listening to it at the same time.

## Online activities for families

---

Share examples of good interactive educational websites that parents and young kids can explore together. Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) has an excellent bilingual site called **Let's Read as a Family** designed to help Latino families read, sing, and share stories together at home. There are lots of other quality websites for kids. Here are a few more of our favorites:

- **National Geographic Kids**: offers great nature videos, activities, games, stories, and more
- **CoolMath4Kids**: take a trip through an amusement park of math and more at this extremely interactive math website
- **Smithsonian Kids Collecting**: how to start your own collection and see what other kids collect
- **Explore Dinosaurs**: FAQs and top 10 myths about dinosaurs, a virtual dig, behind the scenes tours, and more from the National Museum of Natural History
- **Smithsonian Digging for Answers**: a site that tests your research skills and knowledge
- **NASA Quest**: interactive explorations that engage students in real science and engineering. Topics include robots, helicopters, lunar exploration, and designing your own human-friendly planet
- **My Wonderful World**: a multimedia tour of our seven continents
- **Time for Kids**: fun games (The Great State Race), an online weekly magazine written for kids, and news from around the world

**Introduce your students and their families to stories from around the world.** Let them know about the **International Children's Digital Library**, an amazing (and growing!) collection of international children's books available to read online in their original languages. **Big Universe** is another online library of fiction and nonfiction books for kids 0-12. The site also offers adults and kids the chance to create and publish their own stories.

**Suggest audio books as an alternative to print,** especially for kids with learning disabilities that make reading a struggle. You can now download stories to iPods and other mobile devices, perfect for car rides or a lazy hot afternoon. AudibleKids has an extensive collection of **downloadable books**, and some of them are free through a partnership with RIF.

**For students with vision or learning disabilities,** tell your parents about **Learning Ally** (formerly Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic), which provides free audio books for kids to listen over the summer.

## **Print and share with parents**

---

**Distribute a checklist for parents** that provides tips on how to **find a great summer program**. This one, developed by the National Summer Learning Association, is a good basic resource.

**Build background knowledge.** Put an **article about summer learning** in your school or PTA newsletter.

**Use books as a springboard for conversation, creativity, and acquiring new background knowledge** by sharing the Reading Rockets **Family Literacy Bags** with your students' families. These themed packs combine fiction and nonfiction books with simple, hands-on activities that kids and parents can do together.

**Give parents a tool to help them promote healthy and balanced media use** at home during the summer months. The **PACT** from the National PTA may help families come up with good screen time compromises. (The PACT is also available in Spanish.)

**Help parents create a literacy friendly house for the summer** (and all year round) with Get Ready to Read's home literacy checklist, in **English** and **Spanish**.

**Offer reading reminders to parents** with these **tip sheets** from Reading Rockets available in 11 languages.

**Recommend good summer reads that match your students' interests.** You might start with the **2011 Big Summer Read book list** from Reading Rockets.

**Back to Top**

## **Print and share with kids**

---

**Promote simple, fun items that support the reading habit.** Reading Rockets has created a "Warning! Reading Rocket in Orbit" **door hanger** in English and Spanish.

**Recommend some great summer reads that match your students' interests.** Books about **summer stuff** are fun summertime reads. Download the Reading Rockets **Big Summer Read** book lists, with lots of good suggestions for kids up to 9 years old. Or ask your school or public librarian for an age appropriate reading list. **See the U.S.A. through books** this summer, with this great list from the American Library Association — and keep a 'travel' journal while you're reading!

**Some students enjoy doing worksheets** while others get very excited about puzzle books and word scrambles, so you might send home a few of these types of activities as an option. Teacher Planet offers loads of links to summer-themed printable **activity sheets**. And HarperCollins Children's Books has **literature quizzes, games, and printables** in their Games & Contests section.

a

Dolch Pre-Primer

and

Dolch Pre-Primer

away

Dolch Pre-Primer

big

Dolch Pre-Primer

blue

Dolch Pre-Primer

can

Dolch Pre-Primer

come

Dolch Pre-Primer

down

Dolch Pre-Primer



find

for

funny

go

Dolch Pre-Primer

Dolch Pre-Primer

help

Dolch Pre-Primer

here

Dolch Pre-Primer

**I**

Dolch Pre-Primer

in

Dolch Pre-Primer

is

Dolch Pre-Primer

it

Dolch Pre-Primer

jump

little

look

make

me

my

Dolch Pre-Primer

Dolch Pre-Primer

Dolch Pre-Primer

Dolch Pre-Primer

not

Dolch Pre-Primer

one

Dolch Pre-Primer

play

Dolch Pre-Primer

red

Dolch Pre-Primer

run

Dolch Pre-Primer

said

Dolch Pre-Primer

see

the

Dolch Pre-Primer

Dolch Pre-Primer

three

two

Dolch Pre-Primer

to

up

Dolch Pre-Primer

Dolch Pre-Primer

Dolch Pre-Primer

we

Dolch Pre-Primer

where

Dolch Pre-Primer

yellow

Dolch Pre-Primer

you

Dolch Pre-Primer



all

Dolch Primer

am

Dolch Primer

are

Dolch Primer

at

Dolch Primer

ate

Dolch Primer

be

Dolch Primer

black

Dolch Primer

brown

Dolch Primer

but

came

did

do

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

eat

Dolch Primer

four

Dolch Primer

get

Dolch Primer

good

Dolch Primer

have

Dolch Primer

he

Dolch Primer

into

like

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

must

new

no

now

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

on

Dolch Primer

our

Dolch Primer

out

Dolch Primer

please

Dolch Primer

pretty

Dolch Primer

ran

Dolch Primer

ride

saw

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer



say

she

so

soon

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

that

Dolch Primer

there

Dolch Primer

they

Dolch Primer

this

Dolch Primer

too

Dolch Primer

under

Dolch Primer

want

Dolch Primer

was

Dolch Primer

well

went

what

white

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

Dolch Primer

who

Dolch Primer

will

Dolch Primer

with

Dolch Primer

yes

Dolch Primer

after

Dolch First Grade

again

Dolch First Grade

an

Dolch First Grade

any

Dolch First Grade

ask

Dolch First Grade

as

Dolch First Grade

by

could

Dolch First Grade

Dolch First Grade

every

fly

from

give

Dolch First Grade

Dolch First Grade



going

Dolch First Grade

had

Dolch First Grade

has

Dolch First Grade

her

Dolch First Grade

him

Dolch First Grade

his

Dolch First Grade

how

just

know

let

live

may

Dolch First Grade

Dolch First Grade

of

Dolch First Grade

old

Dolch First Grade

once

Dolch First Grade

open

Dolch First Grade

over

Dolch First Grade

put

Dolch First Grade

round

some

Dolch First Grade

Dolch First Grade

stop

take

thank

Dolch First Grade

them

Dolch First Grade

then

Dolch First Grade

think

Dolch First Grade

walk

Dolch First Grade

were

Dolch First Grade

when

Dolch Second Grade

Dolch Second Grade

always

around

Dolch First Grade

Dolch First Grade



because

been

before

Dolch Second Grade

best

Dolch Second Grade

both

Dolch Second Grade

buy

Dolch Second Grade

call

Dolch Second Grade

cold

Dolch Second Grade

does

Dolch Second Grade

don't

Dolch Second Grade

fast

Dolch Second Grade

first

Dolch Second Grade

five

found

gave

goes

Dolch Second Grade

Dolch Second Grade

green

Dolch Second Grade

its

Dolch Second Grade

made

Dolch Second Grade

many

Dolch Second Grade

off

Dolch Second Grade

or

Dolch Second Grade

pull

read

right

sing

sit

Dolch Second Grade

sleep

Dolch Second Grade

tell

Dolch Second Grade

their

Dolch Second Grade

these

Dolch Second Grade

those

Dolch Second Grade



upon

Dolch Second Grade

use

Dolch Second Grade

US

Dolch Second Grade

very

Dolch Second Grade

wash

why

Dolch Second Grade

which

wish

Dolch Second Grade

work

Dolch Second Grade

would

Dolch Second Grade

write

Dolch Second Grade

your

Dolch Second Grade

about

Dolch Third Grade

better

Dolch Third Grade

bring

Dolch Third Grade

carry

Dolch Third Grade

clean

Dolch Third Grade

cut

Dolch Third Grade

done

Dolch Third Grade

draw

Dolch Third Grade

drink

eight

fall

Dolch Third Grade

far

Dolch Third Grade

full

Dolch Third Grade

got

Dolch Third Grade

grow

Dolch Third Grade

hold

Dolch Third Grade

hot

Dolch Third Grade

hurt

Dolch Third Grade

if

Dolch Third Grade

keep

Dolch Third Grade



kind

laugh

light

Dolch Third Grade

long

Dolch Third Grade

much

Dolch Third Grade

myself

Dolch Third Grade

never

Dolch Third Grade

only

Dolch Third Grade

own

Dolch Third Grade

pick

Dolch Third Grade

seven

shall

Dolch Third Grade

Dolch Third Grade

show

six

small

start

Dolch Third Grade

Dolch Third Grade

Dolch Third Grade

Dolch Third Grade

ten

Dolch Third Grade

today

Dolch Third Grade

together

Dolch Third Grade

try

Dolch Third Grade

warm