

Counselor's Corner

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Raising a Summer Reader

When the lazy days of summer arrive and your child's schedule is packed with swimming, camp, and family vacations, it can be a challenge to find time for reading. But kids' reading skills don't have to stop growing just because school's out. Here are some ways to make reading a natural part of their summer fun:

Explore your library. Visit your local library to check out books and magazines that your kids haven't seen before. Many libraries have summer reading programs, book clubs, and reading contests for even the youngest borrowers. Young kids will feel extra grown-up checking out books with their own library card.

Read on the road. Going on a long car trip? Make sure the back seat is stocked with favorite reads. When you're not at the wheel, you can read the books aloud. Get some audio books (many libraries have large selections) and listen to them together during drive time.

Make your own books. Pick one of your family's favorite parts of summer — whether it's baseball, ice cream, vacation, or the pool — and have your child draw or cut out related pictures from magazines and catalogs. Paste the pictures onto paper to make a book, and then encourage your child to write text for each page. A younger child can dictate the story for you to write down (using your child's words). When you're done, read the book together.

Keep in touch. Kids don't have to go away to write about summer vacation. Even if your family stays home, you can encourage your child to send postcards, letters, or e-mails to friends and relatives. Ask a relative to be your child's pen pal, and encourage a weekly exchange of letters, postcards, or e-mails.

Keep up the reading rituals. Even if everything else changes during the summer, keep up the reading routines already in place at your house. Read with your kids every day — whether it's just before bedtime or under a shady tree on a lazy afternoon. And don't forget to take a book to the beach. Just brush the sand off the pages!

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