

## Staying sharp over the summer: supporting your child's learning

We can all remember the joy of summer holidays: long lazy days blowing bubbles in the grass, filling up the kiddie pool in the backyard with the garden hose, the smell of sunscreen mingling with the melody of the ice cream truck announcing its arrival. There is no denying that those warm summer months when school takes a break are a favourite amongst students of all ages, and a time when some of their most meaningful memories are created.

One of the downsides of spending two months out of school though, is a lag in getting back into the rhythm of classes, homework and testing when September comes. It is a commonly known fact among teachers that it can take up to two full months for students to readjust to school and get back to a regular learning speed in the fall. That means four months of the year kids are not learning at the pace they could be. This does not mean that taking a break from school is not valuable – it is important for students to have time to recharge in those summer months. But to maximize your child or teen's learning all year round, there are some strategies you can implement to strike a balance between learning and leisure over the summer or to even combine them!

1. **Encourage daily reading.** Make sure your child is reading every day – whether it is novels, stories at bedtime or their favourite blog – keeping those reading muscles active over the summer is a great way to make sure they will be strong come the fall. Make summertime reading fun: all year long students read what they are assigned; summer is a great time for them to read for pleasure and discover what kinds of stories or topics they find interesting and develop a passion for.
2. **Seek out moments for learning.** Learning happens in all aspects of life, and lots of summertime activities have “teachable moments” built into them already. Anything from making homemade ice cream to collecting insects to identifying plants and flowers can be mined for educational purposes. There are also many summer activity options for older kids. Maybe your teenager loved that photography class they took during the school year and would like to experiment with a camera and some photo editing software. Even something like planting and tending to a vegetable garden can teach your kids valuable skills. Look around you and you will see that there are countless opportunities to integrate learning into an exciting and restful holiday.
3. **Reflect, review, reinforce.** It is easy to help your children maintain their writing skills over the break by supplementing their activities with regular writing exercises. Have them keep a journal chronicling the highlights of each week, and their adventures and conversations with friends. When they go to the cinema seeking air conditioning and entertainment, ask them to write a short review of the movie they saw. If there is a trip planned – whether it is somewhere far or near – ask your child to do some research on the location and write a report following your excursion.

Summer learning does not need to look like school learning – it is not necessarily about memorizing formulas or historical dates, but remaining mentally engaged and active. It can take place indoors and outdoors, and can be social or solitary. The goal is not to retain all the information learned over the school year, but to maintain the knowledge of *how* to learn that will make the transition back to school days go smoothly, while making sure the summer is the best study break it can be.

**For more information, you can read our [parent's summer survival guide](#), or contact your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). If your child could use extra help with learning – from reading, math, study strategies or printing – our [Children's Support Solutions](#) can help. [Learn more and find a clinic location near you.](#)**