

# Pointers For Parents

## Using Summertime To Stimulate Learning

by Bob Chase

(NAPSA)—What parents do with their children after school lets out for the summer has a huge impact on how those children do when school reopens.

Teachers can tell the difference immediately. Some children return to the classroom primed to learn. After a quick refresher, they are ready for lift-off. Other children, however, return to the classroom as if awakened from a long, amnesia-inducing sleep. It takes an intensive review effort just to get them back up to where they were when school ended.



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It's parents, a child's first teachers, who make that difference.

A word of caution: For summer to be intellectually stimulating, it need not be, and must not be, regimented. It is a child's right to be a child, and to enjoy the pleasures of a childhood summer. That can't happen if every hour of the child's day is scheduled.

While no one wants his or her child slumped in front of the TV for hours on end, you don't want to make it a summer of stress, either. Children get enough of that in today's test-crazed schools.

With a little imagination and a lot of common sense, parents can steer a middle course between the extremes of the TV-hypnotized child and what psychologist David Elkind calls "the hurried child." Here are some suggestions:

**Use that library card.** The free public library is a great American institution. Go with your child. Make it a weekly outing, and top it off with a visit to the ice cream parlor.

**Read aloud.** Read aloud to your child for at least a half-hour every day. Snuggle up in a cozy spot and read. As your child grows older and you move into chapter books, your child might, for a time, still prefer the *Goosebumps* or *Arthur* books to *Charlotte's Web* or *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Don't fret. Reading something is better than reading nothing.

**The book search game.** Summer is a time of yard/tag sales, and used books are plentiful and



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often cheap. Make it a game: If your child can find a book worth reading for \$2 or less, you will buy it. Growing up in a house full of books often evokes warm memories later in life.

**Visit a museum.** Some communities have children's museums, and they can be great fun for you and your child. Children also find museums of natural history fascinating, especially when a parent talks with them about the exhibits.

**Mind teasers.** Toy stores these days offer a variety of fun brain games for children of different ages—everything from the *Rush Hour Traffic Jam Puzzle* to *Smath* and *Slimey Chemistry*. For children of middle-school age, there's the free *Figure This! Math Challenges for Families* (1-800-GO-SOLVE).

**Take a walk.** Walk with your child—anywhere. The exercise is good and the talk even better. Talk about anything—what you see, sounds you hear, colors, animals, music, life. Enjoy a moment together, parent and child, in summer's golden light.

A recent poll by Public Agenda showed that 71 percent of parents want to become *more* involved in their children's education. Well, summer's a great time to take the plunge—and the next sound you hear may be your child's teacher applauding.

*Bob Chase is a middle school teacher and president of the National Education Association. For more information, visit [www.nea.org/parents](http://www.nea.org/parents).*