

Summer Activities for Children with Learning Disabilities

From Learning Disabilities Association

When summer vacation arrives, parents are faced with selecting meaningful activities for their child with learning disabilities. Many parents see summer as a time for catching up on academic skills through tutoring, summer school, or one on one instruction with parents. Other parents view summer as a much needed time to rest and be free of the stress that is associated with school and learning activities. Still others see summer as time for learning new skills that there isn't time to learn during the school year. There is no one correct answer. It all depends on the child and his needs.

Summer is a great time for students to do volunteer work. Volunteer opportunities for teens are often listed in the newspaper. Red Cross has a youth volunteer program as do many hospitals. Other opportunities exist in nursing homes, senior centers and summer camps. Volunteering has many advantages including enhancing self esteem, job sampling and experience that can be listed on resumes or for future job applications. Some schools also recognize distinguished service graduates who contribute a significant number of volunteer hours.

Swimming lessons, summer camps, summer sports camps and music lessons are also summer options. These activities focus on areas of development that might be neglected due to the demands of the regular school year. When selecting summer activities, make sure that the leaders or teachers of the activity have some understanding of your child's special needs. If your child has trouble with following directions, for example, provide information about effective ways to give him directions. If he needs time to process information, tell the leader how this is handled at school. Summer activities should have a positive effect on the child. Not everyone is knowledgeable about learning disabilities, so be prepared to share your knowledge to enable your child to have a successful experience.

Some parents find that summer is the time to enhance skills. Tutoring to improve reading, math, writing or study skills is often selected. If formal tutoring is selected, it should be scheduled so that the student still has some break in academic instruction before school starts. Tutoring is often available from private tutors, at some community colleges, through the community education programs at some schools, through park and recreation programs, and through teacher education programs at universities.

The following activities are some ideas that enhance learning that could be done at home:

Elementary School Level

Explore a summer reading program at the library.

Use a children's cookbook to read and follow directions to make favorite foods. Directions in cookbooks can be simplified by numbering them to assist with sequencing.

Encourage child to read the newspaper. Some newspapers have special pages for children.

Read to the child and talk about the book or stories.

If possible, have child read books that could be used for book reports next school year.

Improve vocabulary by learning three new words a week. Post the words on the refrigerator and talk about them each day.

Have the child write post cards to grandparents or friends. Make "child size" post cards using 4X6 cards. Divide one side in half using a dark line. Make lines on one side for the address and lines on the other side for the message. Have the child draw a picture on the reverse side or cut one from a magazine.

Older children could write in a journal each day. Encourage two or three sentences.

Write a letter to family or friends. Reluctant writers benefit from filling in the blanks or dictating the letter to an adult and then copying it.

Use computer games to learn math facts, improve reading and vocabulary.

Listen to math facts on tape or CDs (this can even be done in the car).

Match or sort coins depending on child's age or add random sets of coins

Secondary School Students

Encourage reading of any type. Reluctant readers might enjoy books on tape to listen to as they read.

Many parents obtain the required reading list for the next grade's English class and have the student read at least some of the books in the summer.

Encourage vocabulary improvement through use of "Word a Day Calendars",

Readers Digest Vocabulary pages, or a vocabulary journal and dictionary. If using the vocabulary journal, the student records any word from reading that he does not know and looks it up in the dictionary and writes down the definition.

Read about places that the student will visit on vacation. Have the student write about them in a letter or journal

Figure mileage to various locations using a map scale.

Go to www.math.com for a variety of math review activities

Go to www.bibliomania.com for free online books, stories and poems.

Use computer programs or ACT or SAT preparation books to prepare for ACT or SAT testing.

The lists could go on and on. These are just a few ideas of how learning can continue in the summer. Short learning sessions throughout the summer can be very productive. There should be plenty of time set aside for the child to have fun as well.