



parent pages

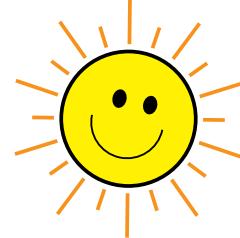
Volume 24

May 2013

Number 5



Literacy Play on a Summer's Day



As a parent, you can help your child be more prepared for school in the fall by taking the time to read, play, and explore over the summer months. Studies show that children who are ready to be successful students tend to do better in school and in life. There are many daily activities you can use to teach your child some of these basic skills. For example, in school your child will need to speak clearly, follow directions, and play and share with others. You can help build these skills by talking with and reading to your child every day and by providing opportunities to play with others.

For young children, literacy begins as a form of play. Through pretend play, drawing, writing, and “pretend” reading, children learn to use symbols to create and communicate meaning. These early symbolic activities are the beginnings of literacy. Incorporating language activities and modeling appropriate language for your child will help her to grow into a lifelong reader and writer. You can begin to help your child develop a love for books and reading and writing by:

- Reading to your child and letting your child see you reading silently
- Filling your home with acceptable reading materials such as magazines, books, and newspapers
- Getting a library card for everyone in the family and attending story times
- Creating a library in your home or placing books in baskets throughout your home
- Making your own books with family pictures that are labeled and stored in a three-ring binder
- Having a family reading night in

place of watching TV

- Providing paper and various writing implements throughout your home
- Letting your child help you create a shopping list or a list of things to take on vacation
- Creating a journal or notebook by asking your child to draw a picture about a trip you took and then asking if he would like you to write about it underneath the drawing (some children can write their own comments).
- Having a variety of print matter on your walls, such as calendars, posters, charts, recipes, sayings, maps, list of chores, etc., and making sure these are posted at your child’s eye level

You are your child’s first and most important teacher, and your home and neighborhood are your child’s first learning environments. The following everyday activities can be turned into learning experiences for the summer.

Nature Walk

Summer is a great time to go for a walk

and collect leaves, sticks, stones, and seeds. When you get home, talk about them, sort them, or glue them onto paper or poster board. You can label them and review them throughout the summer.

Bedtime Story or Song

You can help your child understand time concepts and use language to express ideas by talking with your child at bedtime about her day. Create a story or song about the order of events and how much fun your child had. For example, if you go to the zoo or park, you can talk about the animals or birds you saw and the colors of the flowers.

Album Surfing

Look through a photo album as if you were reading a book. This will give your child an opportunity to identify himself as a member of a specific family or cultural group as well as use language to describe events and interpret pictures.

PERSONAL PARENTING

Children Love It When . . .

- * You tell them jokes
- * You play with them
- * You let them help you
- * You hug them
- * You eat snacks with them
- * You say "I love you"



Magic Potion

It's not easy to get kids to slow down for a nap. And going to bed when it's light outside can be really tricky.



* Try this idea to make the transition easier.

Place a drop or two of lavender oil or vanilla in a spray bottle filled with water. When it's time for sleep, gently spray some of the magic potion into the air. It smells delicious, and it may calm your little ones just enough for them to close their eyes and have sweet dreams.

Three Ways to Reduce Sugar

According to a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **kids get way too much sugar in their diets**. Sodas and sports drinks account for much of it, but added sugars are hidden away in many processed foods such as granola bars, pasta sauce, sugar-sweetened cereals, and even canned fruits.

Here are 3 simple ways you can reduce your child's sugar intake:

1. Drink more water.
2. Switch to a healthier cereal.
3. Eat more fruits and vegetables.



Fruit and Chips

- * Cut a tortilla into 6 pieces.
- * Brush both sides of each piece with olive oil.
- * Sprinkle the top with cinnamon and a little sugar.
- * Bake at 350 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes. Serve with apple slices.

● Kindness Is Contagious

- Research from a new study shows that kindness really is contagious. There is a tendency in human nature to help another person if we see someone else being helpful. It gives us a good feeling. In your own family, you can fill a kindness jar with examples of helpful behavior when you see your child being kind to a sibling, friend, or even the family pet.
- When the jar is full, go out for a treat.



SENSORY AND CONCEPT WALKS

If you want your children to be grounded in nature, you may have to pry them away from the TV and computers. Engage their natural curiosity by taking some very fun walks to discover all kinds of things. Make it even more interesting by occasionally playing some walking games.

Fun with Sensory Walks

- * **Visual:** Ask your child to spot three things that are interesting.
 - One thing on the ground such as a rock or moss
 - One thing at eye level such as a tree
 - One thing above eye level such as a bird flying
- * **Auditory:** Ask your child to listen for two sounds as you walk.
 - A nature sound such as a bird singing or a cricket
 - A man-made sound such as a car in the distance or an airplane
- * **Smell:** Ask your child to smell two things.
 - A natural smell such as a flower or creek bed
 - A man-made smell such as gasoline or smoke
- * **Touch:** Ask your child to find two things to touch.
 - A soft thing such as a flower petal or moss
 - A hard thing such as a piece of wood or gravel

Fun with Concept Walks

As children begin to learn some basic concepts—such as number awareness and distinguishing between what's alike and what's different—you can reinforce their emerging skills by going outside and taking concept walks.

Numbers: Ask your child to find two sticks and three flowers.

Color: Ask your child to find three things that are green.

Size: Ask your child to find two things that are bigger than a squirrel. Ask your child to find two things that are smaller than a leaf.

Alike and Different: Ask your child to find two things that are alike (a stick and another stick). Ask your child to find two things that are different (a rock and a flower).

Make the walks even more interesting:

- Take along a magnifying glass, markers and pencils, a notebook, a camera, and specimen jars.
- Place masking tape around your child's wrist sticky side up and let her stick seeds, twigs, and flower petals onto her "nature bracelet."

All of these ideas encourage sensory awareness, observation, and language skills.

