

KEEPING KIDS IN THE LEARNING CYCLE FOR THE SUMMER

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Something is waiting for their kids this summer, and most parents don't even know it's out there. It's called "summer slide," and it's what happens when young minds sit idle for three months. As parents approach the summer break, most are thinking about the family vacation, the kid's camp, swimming lessons, and how to juggle it all. What they might not be focusing on is how much educational ground their kids will lose during the three-month break from school, particularly when it comes to reading.

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), the nation's oldest and largest children's and family literacy organization, says there is no better time than this summer to begin helping kids bridge the gap. Motivating children to read throughout the year is essential to building lifelong readers and reading is the doorway to all other learning.

According to a November, 2004 report from Johns Hopkins Center for Summer Learning they found that a conservative estimate of lost instructional time was approximately two months or roughly 22 percent of the school year (one month spent re-teaching and one month not spent on new instruction). This summer slide is most pronounced in low-income students who experience an average summer learning loss in reading achievement of over two months. Summer slide affects millions of children each year in this country-but it doesn't have to. With these few easy steps, parents and caregivers can keep their kids from losing ground to summer reading slide.

Reading Tips For Parents:

1. Combine activities with books. Encourage kids to read about summer activities.
2. Visit the library. Help your child get a library card.
3. Lead by example. Show your kids the fun you have reading!
4. Talk it up. Talk with your kids about what you read.
5. Relax the rules for summer. Let summer be a time when children can read what, when and how they please.
6. Have plenty of reading material on hand like storybooks, newspapers, magazines, and informational texts.
7. Use books to break the boredom. Get books that teach kids how to make or do something.
8. Read aloud with kids. Take your children to see a local storyteller or, better yet, be one yourself!

Most experts agree that children who read during the summer gain reading skills, while those who do not often slide backward.