

# SUMMER LEARNING

Written by Angela Bickford

How Cy-Fair Parents Can Keep Learning Alive Over Summer Break

Summer is right around the corner and kids are squirming in anticipation. No more teachers, no more homework, and no more early mornings. Now, it's time for sleeping in and spending all day playing in the sun. But, as the kids walk out of the classroom for the last time this year, the teachers are all screaming the same thing: 'Make sure to read over the summer!' and 'Make sure you practice those Math Facts!'





Fun books and tape sets enable a child to follow along with words - getting a head start on their reading

### Not Just for Strugglers

As a parent, you can help your child stay ahead over summer vacation by sneaking in some learning time during that long stretch away from school. Or, if your child has fallen behind, you're probably searching for ways to catch them up. Either way, teachers will be the first to tell you about the importance of keeping learning alive while the kids are away from school. Regardless of where your child falls on the academic scale, having some practice is beneficial.



### Parent Turned Teacher

You may not have gone to school to be a teacher, but chances are, you know a thing or two about the basics of math, reading, and other subjects. If you have older children, or live in a two-parent household, figure out who has the best knowledge in the subject area needed, and ask them to help out. Grandparents and other family members, or even friends, are also great resources. Remember too - teaching can be done anywhere - the car, on the playground, or while cooking dinner.



Following a recipe is fun for kids but teaches them skills in reading, following instructions, and measuring

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Colorful chips and candy pieces can be a fun way to practice counting and math skills



Silly fun supplies feel more like toys than teaching tools and keep kids interested

## Hands-On Learning

- **MAKE EVERYTHING A GAME.** Find words that start with each letter of the alphabet, find things that are real-life examples of shapes, or see who can solve math facts or spell words the fastest.
- **MAKE LEARNING REAL-LIFE.** Use food for math, whip cream for spelling words, and connect past events to current events to make learning more relevant.
- **GIVE THEM A JOB.** Let them help cook dinner or go grocery shopping. Both involve reading and following directions.
- **USE MANIPULATIVES WHENEVER YOU CAN.** This makes learning tactile and can be anything from store bought blocks to macaroni noodles.
- **DO EXPERIMENTS.** Remember that even cooking can be an experiment.
- **PLAY GAMES OR GET CRAFTY.** It may seem like it's not educational, but anything that uses brain power and gets them thinking works.
- **USE THE RESOURCES YOU HAVE.** Ask teachers, other parents, and friends for ideas. Visit websites.
- **EXPOSE THEM TO REAL LIFE.** Go to a museum or other cultural events to help build their knowledge base.

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## Make It Fun, but Meaningful

First and most importantly, make it fun for your kids. If your child isn't buying in and having fun, it doesn't matter how much time you spend trying to teach them. Secondly, really focus in on what your child needs the most. If they're a great reader, but are behind in math, your focus will most likely be math. But, if they have trouble with spelling, spending time on science isn't going to do much. If your child is struggling in several areas, you'll probably feel like you need to help them with everything. Not true – pick the most foundational skills to start with, or something like reading, a subject that transfers to all areas. Or, focus on a different subject each day of the week.

## So, What Do I Teach?

Trying to find ideas for teaching your child can be difficult, but your child's teacher can be a great resource for at-home practice. Before the year's out, see if they will give you some suggestions on what your child needs to know and how you can help them. There are also many valuable websites full of ideas to get you started and your local teacher supply store is a great resource too.

## WEBSITES AND MORE

**Basic Office Supply**  
10831 Woodedge Dr., Houston  
281-890-6615  
basicschoolsupply.com

**A Touch of Class**  
8190 Barker Cypress Rd.  
Ste. 500, Cypress  
281-861-0008  
ateachersupply.com

**cfisd.net**  
Cy-Fair ISD's website provides grade-level requirements, help-sheets, and more. Click on 'departments' and then 'curriculum and instruction'.

**scholastic.com**  
Scholastic has resources for parents and games for kids.

**busyteacherscafe.com**  
This site is a resource many teachers use that helps with ideas and planning.

**dltk-kids and dltk-teach.com**  
Both sites offer fun activities for kids and great resources for parents.

**mikids.com, funbrain.com/kidscenter, and knowledgebox.com/kbkids**  
Games for all ages and subjects with helpful resources for parents.

**maps.com/funfacts**  
Map skills games for those struggling with geography.

**bensguide.gpo.gov**  
A fun site that teaches kids about our government.

**aplusmath.com**  
A resource full of Math games and resources.

**yucky.discovery.com**  
Full of Science games, experiments, and other yucky fun!

**eduplace.com/tales**  
Geared towards grades 3-5, this website helps create writers.

## PROFESSIONAL TUTORS

Some parents aren't up for being the teacher. With many places offering one-on-one tutoring, you can help your child without feeling helpless. Check your child's school for a list of teachers who also tutor. Summer is a popular time though, so start planning now. Prices range anywhere from \$25-\$75 an hour, depending upon location, subject, and tutor.

**Horizons Tutoring**  
713-859-2699  
horizontutoring.com

**Tutoring Club**  
281-373-9200  
cypressstx.tutoringclub.com

**C2 Tutoring**  
832-593-8300  
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A quiet place for children to work away from distractions is best. Favorite healthy snacks can serve as rewards for good effort



## Some Cautions About At-Home Learning

If you do decide to work with your child on your own, consider setting up school in a place that will help and not hinder the learning. Try to minimize distractions, such as television and friends, and choose a time of day that your child is the most focused. Provide rewards for good effort, and have drinks and snacks on hand. Remember never to keep your child sitting too long – each particular session should last an hour at most. Learning takes time, and you don't want to make your child feel like they're still at school, so remember to make it relaxed and fun. **CFM**

ANGELA BICKFORD is finishing up her last year as a teacher for Cy-Fair ISD and is also the Editor of Cy-Fair Magazine.