



There's no getting around it: Over the summer months, our students can lose up to 60% of the math and reading skills that they learned during the year. From special ways to say goodbye to fun activities to share with parents, here are over 50 ideas to keep the learning going.

last-day activities that bring it home

These activities will help your students reminisce, celebrate fond memories, and bring conclusion to your class. They can be adjusted for any grade level.

- ▶**Sign it:** Create an autograph book for each student. On the last day of school, pass around the books for each student to sign.
- ▶**Record-keeping:** Create a class book of records. Help the class come up with categories, and assign the records (most pairs of shoes, most freckles, most creative, etc.). Every student should have one.
- ▶**Play school:** Create a class board game that takes the students through the school year; include obstacles like testing (*You're too busy and focused to move: Skip one turn.*) and field trips (*You're on the roller coaster at Six Flags: Move ahead three spaces.*).



- ▶**Raffle it:** Clean out your classroom and give students mementos by raffling off items in the classroom. Start with smaller items (such as pencils) and work your way up (class art projects, etc.).
- ▶**Dear next year:** Have students write a letter to next year's class. Ask them to tell the incoming class what they liked and give the incoming students advice.
- ▶**Class time line:** Create a time line of the year together. Post butcher paper around the room and mark off months and important dates. Have the students walk around and fill in events that they remember well.
- ▶**Graph It:** Calculate the amount of time you, as a class, have spent in reading, math, gym, library, lunch, recess, and other planned activities. Then create a graph of how you spent your school year.

starting off right

Even though you're raring for summer vacation, students—especially young students and those with disabilities—may have a hard time moving from the structured school year to full-time vacation. "It's important for teachers to recognize that many children with disabilities have difficulty transitioning," says Dr. George Giuliani, president of the National Association of Parents in Special Education and director of the Graduate Program in Special Education at



Hofstra University. The best thing teachers can do is sit down with parents to discuss summer. "Have a plan," says Giuliani. "Discuss the options. What will the child do—take time off? Go to summer school? Go to camp?"

In the classroom, don't have one plan for all students. "Every child is different," says Giuliani. "Mid-May through June, teachers should have sessions to discuss recreation. Talk about what the students want to do during summer vacation and how they're going to do it. Have them set goals."

Summer math activities

Help students maintain their math skills and keep them thinking in numbers all summer long.

- ▶**For Grades K-3:**
- ▶**Shopaholic:** What can you buy for \$5 at the corner store? From the ice cream truck? In a hardware store? At the beach?
- ▶**Change it up:** Start collecting change in a jar on the

first day of summer. On the last day, estimate your change, count it, and plan a special purchase.

- ▶**Summer patterns:** Create patterns using summer items (popsicle sticks, shells, flowers). Or, draw patterns in the sand or dirt using a stick or your hands. See how long you can carry out your pattern—along the length of the sandbox, or across the grass.

- ▶**Napkin fractions:** Fold paper towels or napkins into large and small fractions, from one-half to 1/16. Use markers to label and decorate the different fractions.

- ▶**Design hunt:** Keep an eye out for shapes, patterns, and designs when you're out and about. You never know what you'll find in the architecture at the airport, the shopping mall, or even the grocery store.

- ▶**100% delicious:** Use ice cream to make fraction sundaes. Can you make an ice cream sundae that is one-half vanilla and one-half chocolate? What about one-third chocolate, one-third vanilla, and one-third strawberry? Can you cover a scoop of ice cream with one-quarter each nuts, sprinkles, cookie crumbs, and gummy bears? Or can you eat a bite of ice cream that is one-half chocolate, one-half vanilla? For older children, calculate the percentage of each ice cream flavor in the sundae.



For Grades 4-8:

- ▶**Record-breakers:** Use a stopwatch to time yourself running, roller blading, swimming, or biking. Then try to beat your time. Be sure to keep the distance you're moving the same for each trial. Graph the results. (You may need a partner for this.)

- ▶**Where will you be?** Using a map, calculate where you will be if you travel 20, 50, 100, or 1,000 miles from home.

- ▶**How many ways?** As you're exploring your neighborhood during the summer, how many routes can you take to the school, the grocery store, the mall, or your friend's house?

What's the catch: No backtracking and you must take a new route each time.

- ▶**Let's eat:** Prepare a meal or dish for the family. Before you go to the supermarket, find a recipe, write what you need and how much. At the supermarket, choose the best-priced option.

Summer reading activities

These ideas will keep kids engaged in reading, writing, and thinking creatively even on the hottest days.

- ▶**Water writer:** Using a pail of water and a brush, have kids write words on the blacktop or sidewalk.
- ▶**Sell summer:** Tell kids: Try a new product or activity and write about it. How would you describe it? Would you recommend it? Create an advertisement to sell it to others.

- ▶**Plan a trip:** Have kids use the Internet, travel guidebooks, brochures, and maps to plan a dream day, weekend, week-, or month-long trip.

- ▶**Summer sleuth:** Have kids follow a story in a newspaper during the summer, or investigate a local story (e.g., an upcoming fair). Tell kids: Write about the



event as it unfolds so that you have it documented from start to finish.

- ▶**Play it:** Take an adventure book with a clear plot (*The Phantom Tollbooth*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, etc.) and invent a board game based on it.

- ▶**Comic strip:** Write a comic strip about a fictional character or yourself. See how long you can keep the strip going. Read classic comics for inspiration.

Summer science fun

Summer is the perfect time for children to explore their extracurricular interests, like science. Here are some activities that will have children hypothesizing all the way to September.

- ▶**Map the weather:** Keep a running log of the weather. Include temperature, humidity, clouds, precipitation, >>



easy Best summer-learning ideas (that are just plain fun)

summer learning

wind, air pressure. Can you predict what the weather will be tomorrow?

▶**Invent a recipe** for a summer drink and share it with your friends. For example, the Citrus Sizzler: 1/2 cup Sprite, 1/2 cup pineapple juice, 1 spritz lime juice.

▶**Museum gallery**: Collect pinecones, rocks, shells, or other natural objects to organize, categorize, and label. Present

your own natural history museum.

▶**Hot-weather inventor**: Design an invention that you can use during summer. Some ideas: sunglasses that change color from red to yellow to blue, or a new beach toy.

▶**Answer a question**: How long does it take an ice cube to melt outside in the summer heat? In the refrigerator? In an

air conditioned room?

▶**Float or sink**: In a pool or the bathtub, hypothesize which items (soap, dry sock, bottle of shampoo, rock, etc.) will float or sink. Test your hypotheses.

great books on the big screen

These new movie releases of favorite children's titles will keep you entertained all summer long:

▶**Nancy Drew** by Carolyn Keene: The ever-perky, resourceful young detective stumbles across a long-unsolved crime.

▶**Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix** by J.K. Rowling: Harry returns for a fifth year at Hogwarts and faces a nasty new adversary in Dolores Umbridge, the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher.

And at your video store:

▶**Bridge to Terabithia** by Katherine Paterson: It tells the classic story of how two friends build their own magical world, and was recently rereleased.

▶**The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe** by C. S. Lewis: This live-action and computer-enhanced version takes the classic story to a new level.

keeping kids motivated

Parent involvement during the summer months is crucial to student success. According to the National Education Association, "Parents who are actively involved in their children's learning at home help their children become more successful learners in and out of school." Encourage parents with a final newsletter full of activities that will stave off forgetfulness and even build skills over the summer.

▶**Set aside time each day to read.**

Track the books your child reads and reward him or her with a special activity or treat when he or she reaches certain milestones (for example, every 10th book). Do art projects based on favorite titles, such as drawing a favorite scene, or making paper bag puppets.

▶**Visit your local library.** Many libraries

have wonderful summer reading programs that reward children for the number of books they read.

▶**Make every day educational.**

Children learn problem-solving, math, science, and vocabulary as they help with groceries, laundry, and cooking.

▶**Create a summer scrapbook.**

Save postcards and movie tickets, record family stories or interesting events from each day, whether you're going on vacation or just going to your neighborhood park.

roadworthy car games

For kids on the bus or families on vacation, put those long rides to good use with activities that keep the kids busy and build reading and math skills.

For grades K-3:

▶**Car bingo**: Create a car bingo card with words, shapes, colors, and items that children will likely see during a trip (stop signs, billboards, railroad signs, etc.) to reinforce reading skills, math, and sight words.

▶**The number game**: Look out the window and call out when you see one, two, three, or four of something, and so on.

▶**The alphabet game**: One person chooses the right side of the road, and the other chooses the left. Call out objects that you see in alphabetical order (you can use a sign only for one letter). The first person to get to the letter *z* wins.

For grades 4-8:

▶**Capital game**: Take note of each license plate you see, not by state but by state capital. The first to correctly identify 10 state capitals wins.

▶**Cow game**: One person takes the right side of the road, the other takes the left. Keep count of all the cows you see. You earn one point for each cow. When you see a cemetery out of your side of the car, you lose all your points.

▶**Animals galore**: Decide on a number of points for each animal that you see (cow = 1 point, horse = 1 point, pig = 2 points, etc.). As you drive, add up

(Continued on page 68)

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summer learning

(Continued from page 35)

points. Play until one person gets 10 points, or for a set time.

▶**Math with license plates:** Use the numbers on license plates to practice addition, subtraction, multiplication, and number patterns and see just how creative kids can get!

summer learning just for you

Be honest, you're as excited about summer as the students are. Here are some ways to make the most of it.

▶**Start a new hobby.**

Take an art, music, or language class.

Write a blog or go retro—make your own cards or stationery using rubber stamps and ink. Take up a new form of exercise.

▶**Read a good book.** So many wonderful titles, so little time. Here are a few to try:

The Freedom Writers Diary, by Zlata Filipovic and the Freedom Writers. The story of a first-year teacher who introduces her students to firsthand historical accounts and unlocks her students' personal histories and creativity in the process. *Teach Like Your Hair's on Fire: The Methods and Madness Inside Room 56*, by Rafe Esquith. The story of a teacher's experience at a central Los Angeles elementary school under NCLB and the bureaucracy of American education. Along with his story, the book provides teaching ideas and strategies. *Up the Down Staircase*, by Bel Kaufman.

Revisit this classic to see just how much and how little have changed in education.

▶**Visit as many museums as you can.**

Without a doubt, it will lead to new teaching ideas. And you never know, it might be a great place for a field trip next year!

▶**Apply for a teacher award.** Some national prizes to dream about: The American Stars of Teaching Award from the Department of Education (www.t2tweb.us/AmStar/About.asp); the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Award gives out the Young Educator of the Year award annually for teachers younger than 40 (www.ascd.org); ING Unsung Heroes gives out over 100 grants and awards each year (www.ing-usa.com); and the National Education Association for Teaching Excellence gives out an annual award for public educators (www.neafoundation.org). Search for more at www.teacherscount.org.

▶**Mentor a soon-to-be first-year teacher.** Find one through an alternative teacher-certification program in your area. Visit The New Teacher Project at www.tntp.org for a list of school districts that they work with around the country.

▶**Don't forget about the hammock.**

Relax and read books you love, dig in the garden, and above all—sleep in! ☐

SAMANTHA CLEAVER IS A SPECIAL-EDUCATION TEACHER AND FREELANCE WRITER IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

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