

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

The Summer 2012 Reading Olympics will be taking place in your home!

This summer, the Summer Olympic Games will be held in London, England. Use this theme to get your family excited about reading by hosting a summer “Reading Olympics.” Of course, every Olympic Games—even reading ones—need:

- **A torch.** To make a “Reading Olympic Torch,” have each family member trace his or her hand on a sheet of construction paper. Cut out the hands and tape them to the top of a paper cone to symbolize flames. Pass the torch and have your child read about the real Olympic torch to finish your “Opening Ceremony.”
- **Events.** Perhaps participants have to read a book in each of five categories: fiction, nonfiction, Olympic history, a book set in London, and a book about sports. Maybe you’d like to reward the person who reads the most books or the most pages. Get creative—see who can walk the farthest while reading without tripping!
- **Medals.** Award medals for participation—simple paper circles attached to ribbons are perfect. Ask each person to name his or her favorite book read during the Reading Olympics.

Source: “Family Olympic Torch,” Reading is Fundamental, www.rif.org/us/literacy-resources/activities/family-olympic-torch.htm.



Brand X

Four books stop the ‘summer slide’

Research shows that kids who read **just four books** over the summer will avoid “summer slide”—the loss of academic skills kids experience when they’re not in school. Encourage your child to read this summer, but don’t make it seem like an assignment. Say, “It’s summer, and you get to read what you choose! I’ll even let you stay up late if a book is so good you can’t put it down.”



Source: L.J. Colker, Ed. D., “What Can Families Do to Keep Children Reading During the Summer?” Reading is Fundamental, www.rif.org/us/literacy-resources/articles/what-can-families-do-to-keep-children-reading-during-the-summer.htm.

Spice up those bookshelves

Looking for a rainy-day reading activity this summer? With your child, rearrange your family bookshelf in a fun way. Show off gorgeous covers, or decorate shelves with small toys. The new look for old books just might inspire more reading.



Plan ahead for family reading success

Summer is a great time to read the same book as your child—and have fun discussing it, too. But if you’re worried that your child will reject this idea, prepare in advance. Let him pick from books with irresistible elements like:

- **Humor.** Young readers giggle at pictures and wordplay. Older kids understand jokes that play out through dialogue and scenes.
- **Personality.** Look for main characters who are similar to your child in feelings and experiences.
- **Excitement.** Reluctant readers like short chapters with lots of action. Even the first paragraph should be fascinating!
- **Uniqueness.** Sometimes a book’s cover draws readers in. Stand-out topics (like “Gross bugs!”) attract readers, too.

Source: L. Backes, “Writing Books for Kids Who (Think They) Hate to Read,” www.writerswrite.com/childrens/writingforkidswohatetoread.htm.

Combat common reading excuses



Does your child frequently give one of these reasons for not wanting to read?

- **“I don’t have time.”** Help your child rearrange her schedule to include time specifically for reading.
- **“It’s too hard.”** Ask your child’s teacher to help you find reading materials written at your child’s reading level.
- **“It’s no fun.”** Extend your child’s positive reading experiences. If she enjoyed a book about dinosaurs, follow up with a visit to a museum.

Summer reading programs lead to real progress

Has your child joined a library summer reading program yet? In addition to being fun, research shows they're linked to better reading skills when school starts. Keep in mind they also:



- **Offer exciting activities.** For example, kids may do art projects, form book clubs and meet authors.
- **Encourage the use of all kinds of materials.** Many kids enjoy magazines, graphic novels and audio books.
- **Provide motivation in a safe environment.** Library events are good chances to socialize with other readers, too.
- **Build good habits,** such as visiting the library often. And once a child likes summer reading events, she may want to come back next summer!

Source: "Library Services," U.S. Department of Education, <http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Library/Services.html> and "Why Public Library Summer Reading Programs Are Important," Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, <http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/pdf/slp-points.pdf>.

Games make vocabulary words memorable

This summer, introduce your child (and yourself!) to one new word a day. Do it in fun ways that feel more like games than learning. Then use the words several times to reinforce them. For example:



Hemera

- **Open a children's dictionary** and pick a random word. Have everyone take a turn at guessing its definition before reading the real definition.
- **Use a "word of the day"** email or calendar. Read them together and see who can come up with the funniest sentence using today's word.
- **Read an interesting article** in the newspaper aloud. Choose one unfamiliar word and look it up. Who can use it in a conversation tomorrow?



Q: I want my child to relax this summer—but I don't want her spending all her time with TV and video games. What reasonable limits should I set?

A: In general, experts recommend two hours or fewer of screen time a day—and no more than about 10 hours per week. That leaves plenty of time for more important activities, such as reading, playing and talking with family members.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

Innovative website lets children personalize online books

If your child resists reading, consider checking out a website that lets him create and narrate his own books—free of charge. At <http://littlebirdtales.com>, kids can do all this and more, including sharing stories by email. Be sure to supervise and help when needed.



For lower elementary readers:

- **Whole-y Cow! Fractions Are Fun** by Taryn Souders (Sleeping Bear Press). Short poems and vivid pictures illustrate and simplify the concept of fractions.
- **Jasper John Dooley: Star of the Week** by Caroline Adderson (Kids Can Press). It's Jasper's week to shine—but nothing is going according to plan. Will he be able to get back on track with the help of his family and friends?



For upper elementary readers:

- **Pie** by Sarah Weeks (Adams Media). Alice's aunt died and left a secret (and popular) pie crust recipe to her cat. She also left her cat to Alice. Now the town is going pie crazy!
- **The New Kid** by Mavis Jukes (Dial). Carson is the new kid in class—with no friends except for his stuffed moose named Moose. But when Moose goes missing, will Carson be able to make a real human friend?

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Jennifer McGovern.
Writer: Susan O'Brien.

Copyright © 2012, The Parent Institute® (a division of NIS, Inc.)
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302
www.parent-institute.com