Don’t Let your Children Waste the Summer in Front of a Screen

The lazy days of summer can lead to lazy hours in front of the TV, computer or game system. But experts say it’s important to limit screen time. A good rule of thumb is two hours a day or fewer.

So what can your children do once their two hours of screen time are up? Have them try these ideas:

- **Be the entertainment.** Instead of watching a show, your children can create one! Encourage them to choose an exciting story line and act it out with friends or stuffed animals.

- **Play classic games.** Fill a bucket with traditional summer toys, including sidewalk chalk, balls, and bubble stuff and water sprayers. When the weather is right, take it outside for hours of fun.

- **Plan a treasure hunt.** Hide lots of clues, with each one leading to the next. This can be done outside or inside. The last clue should lead to a treasure, such as fruit-juice popsicles or a fun activity.

- **Get some exercise.** Go for a walk or ride bikes together. Toss or kick a ball around. Consider learning how to play a new sport together.

Help Your Children Maintain a Love of Learning This Summer

Even if your children complain about school, chances are they love learning. Here are some ways to spark your children’s interest in learning all summer long:

- **Make time to talk.** Studies have shown that when families talk often about many subjects, kids have higher IQs. Look for opportunities to talk with your child, such as during meals or in the car.

- **Support your children’s interests.** For example, if your child loves playing the guitar, read books about the instrument, go to a free concert, or encourage your child to write to a famous guitarist.

- **Try a new activity** you can do with your children, such as a sport. Choose something they are excited about. Show how interested you are in learning, improving and not giving up.

- **Become tourists** in your own town. Check out an exhibit at your city’s science center, art museum or library. Explore a different trail at a local park. (Or even hike a familiar trail at an odd time.) Whatever you do, try to see your “same old town” through fresh eyes.

- **Start your own book club.** Let your children pick a book. Read it together and then set a date to talk about it. Suggest that they include some of their friends.

- **Set an example** by learning more about the things you love. If you enjoy cooking, for instance, take a cooking class, check out a cookbook at the library, or try new recipes. Invite your children to help.
Help Your Children Remain Focused on Schoolwork Until Year’s End

Some kids act like summer vacation has already started. They “forget” their homework at school. They stop giving their best effort and start avoiding anything that seems difficult or challenging.

But the school year has not yet ended. Kids need to stay focused on learning until the last day of school. Here’s how to help your child:

Review old homework papers, quizzes and tests. Use them to talk with your children about how much they have learned this year. Having these papers close at hand will also be useful as they study for end-of-year tests!

Shape year-end learning around some of your children’s interests. If they have more than one book report due, suggest they choose a book on topics they love. If they have a social studies project, they should focus on something they are interested in learning.

Help your children manage their end-of-year projects. Long-range assignments can overwhelm any child. So, in addition to helping your children break a big project down into smaller steps, here’s a great rule of thumb: Encourage your children to move the deadline for finishing any big project earlier by two days. If a report is due on Friday, aim to get it finished by Wednesday. That way, they will have a cushion if (okay, when) something comes up!

Inspire Journal Writing This Summer With Creative Ideas

The summer is a great time for your children to begin writing in a journal. All they need is an empty notebook and a few ideas to get started. Suggest that they keep:

A research log. Have your children pick a subject they love, such as skateboarding. Over the summer, your child can research and write about it. What are some cool skateboard tricks? How long are skateboards? Who holds records for skateboarding?

A travel log. Each time your children go somewhere special—whether it’s far away or close to home—they can keep a record by taking pictures, drawing or writing notes. What did they see? Who did they meet? What did they think?

An observation log. Suggest that your children observe something over a period of time, such as a summer vegetable as it grows. Or they can pick something to describe in great detail, such as a bug or an animal.

The habits we form from childhood make no small difference, but rather they make all the difference.

—Aristotle