

Q. My son almost failed 4th grade this year. We got him extra tutoring and with the help of his dedicated teacher, he was able to make it through the rest of this school year. I am concerned that he will lose the new skills he has gained over the summer. How can I keep him from falling behind over the summer and prepare him for the next grade?

A. Good question! It is so important to keep academic skills solid over the summer. Many children experience what's called the 'summer slump.' When they return in September they appear to have never seen the tasks before. Keeping kids sharp academically, while they still enjoy the summer, is key to academic success. Kids are most vulnerable to lose the skills they learned in the last few months of school as there was less time to practice. Research shows that most students lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in mathematical skills over the summer months. **Low-income** students also lose **more** than two months in reading achievement. Keeping the previous skills in tact and learning some new things for the next grade, do not have to be expensive. Most bookstores have paperback books for various subjects and for various grade levels. Some have one big book for each grade. I would recommend focusing on reading, math and writing skills. Science and social studies are important subjects too, but if your child is deficient in reading skills, he/she will have difficulty reading about science and social studies. It's very important to remember that it's more beneficial to work on academics

everyday for short periods

than once a week for long periods of time. For your son's age and grade, I think 2 hours per day is adequate. If he is way behind, he can practice 2 hours in the morning and then enjoy some free time and then an additional hour in the late afternoon to polish his skills. Get a 4th

grade book for the first few weeks of summer and then introduce the 5th

grade skills for the rest of the summer or combine them. You will be re-teaching, teaching and pre-teaching. Here are some ideas you can use to assist you this summer:

1. Visit your local library and get your son a card so he can take out books to read.

1. This can be a shared time to read together.

1. Take advantage of the programs your library may offer for the summer.

1. Look for local churches that have small camps that provide academic support.

1. Do some simple science projects with your son that he can help create.

1. Visit local parks, the zoo, aquariums and museums as these build much needed vocabulary skills.

1. Take him grocery shopping with you and buy some new foods you've never had before and let him help you find recipes and help you cook. This again builds vocabulary and organization skills. He can also benefit from measuring and weighing as math skills.

2. Let him help you plant a garden in the backyard or in pots in an apartment window.

1. After all of these activities, encourage him to write about all he did that day.

1. Try the summer programs at school, Boys and Girls Club, community center or local Parks and Recreation Department. Summer activity programs give kids a place to learn new skills, make new friends and be active.

1. Limit TV and video game time to 2 to 3 hours per day!

1. Although kids won't have school they should still get enough rest each night so insist they are in bed by 9:30 the latest.

1. Summer is the perfect time for parents to take control of their family's health. Outdoor activities are endless and seasonal fruits and vegetables are more available. Eating healthy and living active also helps kids feel good, reduces stress, improves strength and increases self-esteem.

1. *Let them read what they want. Unlike the school year, summer offers days and*

days of freedom to read what they want to, rather than having to read certain

books.

1. *Get audio, or read-along, books from your local library and play them during*

□□□□□□ *those long summer road trips. Reading along with the narrator is fun for the kids.*

1. Get them involved in sports, which keeps kids healthy and active as well as

teaches them teamwork.

Visit the following website links below! They have tons of free printable summer books for each grade, academic suggestions, and tips for avoiding summer slump and are free for you!

<http://school.familyeducation.com/back-to-school/skill-builder/62428.html>

□□□□□□ <http://yclibrary.org/>

□□□□□□ <http://www.readinghorizons.com/blog/post/2011/05/12/3-Tips-to-Avoid-the-> □

□□□□□□ [Summer-Reading-Slump.aspx](#)

Here are some fun educational sites for your son to visit:

Scholastic.com/summerreading: Lots of titles for all levels.

Kids-space.org

Rif.org/readingplanet: Activities, authors and contests for every level.

Bookreviewsbykids.com: Allows your child to post his/her own book review.

Funschool.kaboose.com: Fun math, science and language-arts activities.

Discoverykids.com: Uses games, experiments, etc. to teach about science.

Freshbrain.org

Exploratorium.edu

www.ala.org

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