

# FUN ACTIVITIES FOR SUMMER LEARNING



Keep your children engaged, active and learning during the summer months



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Now is the time to begin thinking about summer activities to keep your children engaged, active and learning over the summer months.

Did you know that if students stop learning during the summer, they can lose more than two months of what they learned in reading and math? This is called summer learning loss and it occurs when students forget what they learned over the school year. Students who consistently fall behind due to summer learning loss throughout their elementary school years could wind up falling more than 2.5 years behind their peers by the end of fifth grade.

The Office of Family and Community Engagement partnered with teachers from different grade levels to develop this Fun Activities for Summer Learning Parent Guide. The guide is filled with activities that will help you keep your children engaged, active and learning during the summer months.

**We appreciate everything you do to support your children's education.**

**Together we can ensure that every child succeeds in the Denver Public Schools.**

### **A special thank you to the following teachers who helped in the development of the Summer Learning Guide:**

**Park Hill Elementary School: Mary Beth Carlson, Kathleen Isberg, Cheryl Kling, Chris Ando**

**West Leadership Academy: Diego Romero, Kristin Repaci, Bronwen Forrestal, Margarita Colindres**

**Summer Academy: Lorenza Lara and Alejandra Estrada**

### **HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS ON HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING:**

- Let your child know how much you love and value him or her.
- Provide opportunities for your child to see you reading, both for enjoyment and for information.
- Read to your child every day. Children love to hear their favorite stories over and over again. Get a library card and go to the library weekly. Discuss the books after you have read them.
- Help your child express his or her theatrical side and reading comprehension by doing fun activities related to his or her favorite books. After taking time to read a story together:
  - Ask your child to act it out and have props or costumes your child can use.
  - Have him or her draw the characters in the story or make them out of pipe cleaners or popsicle sticks.
  - Ask your child to make different faces to show the way the character in the story is feeling.
- Encourage your child to ask questions. Answer them in language your child can understand.
- Talk with your child about daily activities, trips and special events that happen in your child's life.
- Display your child's work in a prominent place.
- Take your child as many places as possible – shopping, to the zoo, the airport or local parks, for example.
- Provide learning materials for your child such as books, paints, scissors, paper, crayons and pencils.

- Teach your child their birthdate, address and phone number.
- Limit the time your child watches television and supervise closely what he or she is watching.
- Teach your child the letters in their first and last names and how to write them.
- Help your child learn their colors.
- Sing songs and say nursery rhymes.
- Play games (card and board games as well as outside games).
- Count objects together.
- Have your child sort and categorize many different things by size or shape. These can include small plastic toys such as animals and vehicles, blocks, or other small objects such as coins, stamps, cups, and bottle caps. Have children explore different ways to sort objects into similar groups.

## GRADES 1-3

The following fun reading, writing, math and science activities will give your children an opportunity to practice their thinking skills and increase their awareness of words, patterns and skills needed to be successful in school. These learning activities can be done at home or anywhere else. Try out a few of these fun activities each day or create your own.

### READING

- Read labels on clothes (where was it made?) and food packages (what are the ingredients?).
- Make vocabulary “flash cards” using interesting words from stories you are reading or talking about.
- Read aloud together. ECHO reading means one person reads first and the second person echoes the words. CHORAL reading means you read together at the same time. Talk about the text. What did you learn? What else do you want to know?
- Look at pictures or other illustrations and read the labels. Did the words explain the picture or did the picture explain the words?
- Go to the library and find books you are interested in and read them. Have your child tell your family what he or she liked about the book. Have them identify new words and ask someone what the word means. Help your child make their own dictionary in a notebook.

### WRITING

- Play grocery store: label items and make a grocery list.
- Play restaurant: make a menu, take orders and write out a ticket.
- Write out your plans each week.
- Write about your favorite TV show. Why is it your favorite show?
- Help plan the meal for one night by writing down the list of ingredients.
- Go on a treasure hunt for words: create a list of the words to find.

- Ask your family to name their favorite things and write down their answers.
- Write a story with all the members of your family as characters.

## MATH

- Talk about math. For example: We have two children and two adults coming to dinner, how many places should we set the table for?
- Incorporate math into games such as checkers. Ask your child, "If there are 12 checkers on each side of the checkerboard, and you jump me three times, how many checkers will I have left?" Another game is "I'm thinking of a number." For example, "My number plus six is 10. What is my number?"
- Measure the knife, fork and spoon by inches and or centimeters. Discuss which is longer or shorter and by how much.
- Help students understand place value by adding and subtracting two-digit numbers.

## SCIENCE

- Plant and care for different seeds including flowers and vegetables. Record information as they grow.
- Explore and examine changes in your shadow over the course of the day.
- Try to identify insects and birds you see in your community. Look for their "habitats" in your yard and neighborhood. Try to recreate a "natural" habitat in a shoebox. Discuss what living things need to survive.
- Collect, compare and discuss rocks.
- Look at the stars at night. Note the changes in the moon and stars.
- Study a human body diagram and draw or label the systems: skeletal, respiratory and digestive.

## GRADES 4 AND 5

The following activities will give your children an opportunity to practice their thinking skills and increase their awareness of words, patterns and skills needed to be successful in school. These learning activities can be done at home or anywhere else. Try out a few of these fun activities each day or create your own.

## READING

- Movie subtitles: Turn on closed-captioning while you watch TV. Name the important characters and describe their personalities. Retell the story.
- Comic books and graphic novels: Compare different heroes. What makes them heroes? Who do they save? Is there more than one character?
- Recipes: Follow the directions and make something new. Write down new vocabulary.
- Magazines and the internet: Read about the earth, animals, plants and famous people. How are animals and people the same? If plants disappeared, what would happen?
- Write letters to family members who do not live in Denver. Ask them to write back to you.

## WRITING

- Write the grocery list each week.
- Write an episode of a favorite TV show with you in it.
- Research your favorite subject and create a presentation for your family.
- Write a list of chores for the week.
- Write about your favorite TV show. Tell why it is your favorite show?
- Write out the daily weather report and become your family's weather forecaster.
- Prepare questions for an interview. Interview someone and write the answers in a journal.
- Compare and contrast two TV shows; which is the best and why?

## MATH

- Count things and compare them. For example, there are 15 apples in a 5-pound bag for \$10.99 and 25 oranges in a 10-pound bag for \$10.79. What's the best deal?
- Tell time together. Compare a digital watch to an analog clock.
- While you are cooking, use recipes to find fractions (1/4 tsp. salt, for example) or work together to double and half the recipes.
- Help your child learn to divide by evenly sharing toys, food and money.
- Measure angles and find and identify right angles in your home.
- Find the perimeter of a room. Double the length, double the width and add them together.
- Determine the area of a room using length times width.
- Teach your child to count coins and make change.

## SCIENCE

- Look at the sky at night. Note the changes in the moon and stars.
- Create or draw a model of the solar system.
- Learn about recycling and participate in your community.
- Experiment with water. Record the evaporation of water in an open jar.
- Test the density of objects by checking whether they sink or float.





- Keep a weather journal. Study and write about the weather patterns.
- Study human body diagram and draw and label the systems: skeletal, respiratory and digestive.

## GRADES 6-8

School may be out for the summer but the learning doesn't stop. While there are many worthwhile summer camps, classes and programs in our community to keep your student engaged and learning over the summer, there are also many things you can do as a family to keep your students learning and practicing their thinking skills. Take an interest in your student's summer activities to ensure learning keeps on going.

## READING

- Plan a family experience after reading a book on the topic.
- Share reading materials from your native country or in your native language. You can gather these materials and create a scrapbook.
- Write your favorite family story. Illustrate it, and take turns reading it. Reflect on different stories and discuss different story telling styles.
- Take turns reading aloud while you read a variety of literacy materials such as food menus or recipes, bus schedules and ads.
- After reading a book, provide an opportunity for the family to role play various scenes from the book.
- Use technology at home or library such as iPods, iPads, smart phones or a Kindle to access e-books.

## WRITING

- Treat yourself to a beautiful new journal or notebook. Record your thoughts and what you are doing this summer so that you never forget it. Buy a journal with no lines on the pages so you can draw and write.
- Make a list of everywhere you want to go this summer. Continue adding to the list, and cross out the places you've visited.
- Start your own blog about your summer.
- Challenge yourself to write long messages to your friends and family on Facebook. Super-challenge yourself to use correct punctuation, spelling and capitalization to keep yourself in shape!
- Research a vacation destination and write to the tourist board for information.

## MATH

- Play mental math in the car. See how many problems you can get correct before you reach your destination.
- Use the odometer in the car to keep track of how many miles your family drives each day, then graph it.
- When you go to buy something at the store, calculate the sales tax and try to make exact change. See if you are correct.
- Predict the number of times a coin will land on heads if you flip a coin 100 times. Then, give it a try. Record your results in a table. Do this experiment a few times and compare your results.
- Have a lemonade stand. Figure out how much to charge for each cup in order to make a profit.
- Time yourself running 1 mile. Keep track of your time each week. Graph your progress and see your improvement.

## SCIENCE

- Do science experiments with your child. For example, try making an egg float in salt water, or try mixing oil and water. Search the internet for other experiments.
- Find a scientific article and have your child share a summary.
- As you drive, have your child find and define science words on the road.
- Visit the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.
- Take your child camping and talk about nature, and talk about why you cannot see the stars during the day or in the city.

## GRADES 9-12

School may be out for the summer but the learning doesn't stop. While there are many worthwhile summer camps, classes and programs in our community to keep your student engaged and learning over the summer, there are also many things you can do as a family to keep your students learning and practicing their thinking skills. Take an interest in your student's summer activities to ensure learning keeps on going.

## READING

- Engage in a conversation about current events that are relevant to your family, and find more information in newspapers, magazines and other social media.
- Before reading a text, discuss what the purpose for reading is and talk about any predictions you might have about the text. After reading, check for understanding of the text.
- Use technology to promote online learning programs at home or at the library. Use the internet to access e-books, online book clubs, magazines and newspapers.
- Choose a family story, and engage in a learning dialogue with your family to identify what is the purpose of the story. Take turns retelling the story.
- Share reading materials from your native country or in your native language.

## WRITING

- Have you ever gotten a real letter in the mail? Try writing to a relative that lives far away from you. Even though we have Facebook and e-mail, there's nothing like getting a letter in your hands!
- College application essays usually ask about the following topics: an important incident that changed your life, an obstacle that you had to overcome, or something you worked hard to achieve. Work your brain out this summer by jotting down notes on each of these subjects in a notebook. When it comes time to write these essays, you will be so glad that you have those notes.

## MATH

- Keep a record of the temperature each day. Calculate the average temperature for each week. Which week was the warmest? Which month was the warmest?
- Look through the supermarket ads online, in the store and in the newspaper. Which supermarket has the best deals?
- Help with your family grocery shopping. Cut coupons and calculate how much money you will save.
- Plan a dinner for your family with a budget of \$15.
- Make a monthly budget for yourself. Save at least 25% of your monthly income.
- Have your friends over for a summer celebration. Buy snacks and plan activities. Keep the cost under \$2 per person.

## SCIENCE

- Do science experiments. Build a volcano, make a paper clip float or clean pennies with vinegar. Search the internet for other ideas.
- Cook a meal with your parent or guardian and talk to them about process, temperature, directions and their overall reactions.
- Think about science in "if-then" terms. For example, "If I cook a meal, then I will not be hungry."
- Plant a garden of vegetables or flowers and journal your observations. Be sure to water them!
- Look at your thermometer each day during the summer and create a line graph to present to your science teacher the first day of school.

## 82 SUMMER ACTIVITIES FOR ALL FAMILIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

**By Karen Wang, courtesy Learning Ally**

Between June and September my kids have 82 days of summer vacation, and I've promised them something fun every single day. That means I need 82 fun summer activities for one child with a developmental disability and one child who refuses to participate in most activities. It'll be a piece of cake, right? Borrowing the weekday "Summer Schedule For Kids" at [somewhatsimple.com](http://somewhatsimple.com), scouring the internet for more ideas and adding some of my own activities, here are 82 days of summer fun and learning:

## SAFETY SUNDAY

1. Teach your child his or her full name.
2. Teach your child your full name.



3. Have your child memorize your home address – show where the house number is located outside and point out the street name.
4. Have your child memorize your phone number. Practice reciting key information.
5. Learn how to cross the street safely.
6. Practice an escape route in case of fire.
7. Practice saying no. Make it a game in which you take turns asking each other to do increasingly absurd things.
8. Play hide-and-go-seek to teach your child how to remain calm while looking for you.
9. Teach your child the buddy system.
10. Teach your child what an emergency is and how to call 911.
11. Practice asking for help with things that are hot, sharp, dangerous or too high to reach.
12. Start swimming lessons.

### MAKE SOMETHING MONDAY

13. Arrange five or six photos to make a poster or scrapbook page.
14. Sweetened condensed milk makes a beautiful, edible fingerprint.
15. Plant a seedling outdoors.
16. Dig for worms – it's a great exercise for fine motor skills and tactile defensiveness. Re-home the worms next to that seedling you planted.
17. Bubble snakes.
18. Make a leaf scrapbook.
19. Color the sidewalk with chalk. Wash it all away with water.
20. Paint using different types of paintbrushes: a fly swatter, a flower, a cotton swab, a sponge, a leaf, for example.
21. Build an obstacle course with Hula Hoops, lawn furniture and empty boxes.
22. Tie-dye some t-shirts.
23. Make a magic wand using all available materials.
24. Build a "fairy house" outdoors with sticks, pebbles, pine cones, bark, leaves and other natural materials found outdoors.

### TIME TO READ TUESDAY

25. Sign up for your local library's summer reading program.
26. Read a book under a tree.
27. Read all but the last page of a storybook and ask your children to suggest an ending.
28. Have your child dictate and illustrate a story, and read it together. It's OK if the story is one or two sentences long.
29. Make a home video of your child reading a story aloud, or of you reading aloud to your child.
30. After you finish reading a book such as "The Lorax," go see the movie.
31. Read some books on a specific topic, such as insects, then do a related activity such as a bug hunt or catching fireflies.
32. Have your child create a summer schedule for the family and read off the schedule every morning.
33. Check out a book of simple science experiments and try some of them at home.
34. Check out a book about a historical figure and play dress-up at home.



## SUMMER PROGRAMS

Quality afterschool and summer programs help kids stay active, engaged and safe when they are not in school. The Denver Afterschool Program Locator provides information on programs offered to youth after school and in the summer in the city and county of Denver.

<http://cps.civicore.com/map>

### ELA Summer Academy

720-423-3629

To register, please email:

[DPSSummerAcademy@dpsk12.org](mailto:DPSSummerAcademy@dpsk12.org)

### Scholars Unlimited

303-355-0290

To register, please visit:

<http://scholarsunlimited.org/programs/summer-learning/>

### Discovery Link Summer Camps

720-423-1781

### Boys and Girls Club

303-892-9210

To find a club near you, please visit: <http://www.bgcmd.org/clubs>

### Denver YMCA

720-524-2700

For more information and to register, please visit:

<http://www.denverymca.org/camps>

**The DPS Summer Learning Guide was developed by the Office of Family and Community Engagement, Denver Public Schools.**

35. Have your child write out a checklist for a scavenger hunt, and find everything on the list together.
36. Swap favorite books with your friends.

## WHAT'S COOKING WEDNESDAY

37. Fruit smoothies in the blender.
38. No-bake oatmeal cookies on the stove.
39. Pizza.
40. Spinach-artichoke dip in the blender.
41. Banana muffins.
42. Roll-up sandwiches.
43. Fruit kebabs.
44. Chicken soup in the slow cooker (plug it in on the porch so that it doesn't heat up the house).
45. Roasted marshmallows.
46. Scrambled eggs and pancakes for dinner.
47. Lemonade from scratch.
48. Guacamole.

## THOUGHTFUL THURSDAY

49. Wash the car together. No driveway and no car? Then wash the toy cars.
50. Call someone just to say hello.
51. Pick some flowers (dandelions and clovers are OK) and give the bouquet to someone who isn't expecting them.
52. Write a top 10 list of a person's best attributes and give the list as a gift to that person.
53. Write a thank-you letter to someone and mail it.
54. Donate clothing, books and toys to charity.
55. Teach your child to do one chore.
56. Give someone a homemade art project.
57. Volunteer at a food bank.
58. Collect bottles and cans, and donate the money to charity.
59. Take a silent moment and honor a loved one
60. Hug someone who needs a hug.

## SOMEWHERE FUN FRIDAY

61. Petting farm or petting zoo.
62. A playground in a different neighborhood.
63. An art museum – check first to see when general admission is free!
64. The beach.
65. Pick fresh fruit at a local farm or visit the farmer's market.
66. Ride a train.
67. Find a carnival or a street fair.
68. Ice cream shop.
69. Waterpark or "spray" ground.
70. Visit a friend's house.
71. Take a walk outside or go to the Botanic Gardens.
72. Take the elevator to the top floor of the highest building and enjoy the views.

## SOCIAL SKILLS SATURDAY

73. Tell a story from your own childhood. Have your child tell a related story from his or her life experience – yes, even if your child is nonverbal.
74. Lie in the grass and take turns looking for shapes or pictures in the clouds.
75. Go around and ask every family member at home the same silly question, and share the answers.
76. Look at some old family photos and name all the people in them.
77. Practice making emotional facial expressions on cue with your child: neutral, happy, sad, fearful, angry, disgusted, surprised. Take turns and make it fun.
78. Practice listening skills by responding only with nonverbal communication for one to five minutes – then switch roles.
79. Be someone’s mirror: imitate a person’s actions as if you are that person’s reflection in a mirror for one minute. Then switch roles.
80. Play follow the leader. Match the leader’s pace for as long as possible, then let a new leader take over.
81. Play the statue game: one person freezes like a statue and the other person has to make the statue laugh. Take turns.
82. Develop family traditions: sing a song together, recite a poem or make some crafts.

## ABOUT KAREN WANG

Karen Wang is a Friendship Circle parent. You may have seen her sneaking into the volunteer lounge for ice cream or being pushed into the cheese pit by laughing children. She is a contributing author to the anthology “My Baby Rides the Short Bus: The Unabashedly Human Experience of Raising Kids With Disabilities.” Link to the article: <http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2012/06/20/82-summer-activities-for-families-with-special-needs/>

## ABOUT LEARNING ALLY

Learning Ally is a national nonprofit organization in existence since 1948. Learning Ally is an organization that helps children and adults access reading through human-recorded audio books. Learning Ally currently offers over 80,000 titles, including textbooks, classic titles, popular fiction, and many more Common Core materials to students with print-based disabilities. Through a gift from the Denver Foundation, all DPS schools have unlimited access to Learning Ally’s audiobooks. To determine if your child qualifies for Learning Ally, please contact your DPS Special Education teacher. You may also visit [www.learningally.org/dps](http://www.learningally.org/dps) for more information.

## VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES FOR APP AND MEDIA REVIEWS

**Common Sense Media** - Find age-appropriate movies, books, apps, TV shows, video games, websites and music that you and your kids will love. Browse our library of more than 28,000 reviews by age, entertainment type, learning rating, and genre. [www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org)

**DPS Parent Slides** - Tips on taming digital media, social media cellphones, and internet safety. <https://sites.google.com/dpsk12.net/digcit/resources/slide-decks>

