

## Ideas for Keeping Learning Going All Summer

### The Most Important Thing You Can Do To Get Smarter & Stronger

- Whenever you feel like turning on the TV or playing computer games, first come get this list of ideas and pick something from it to do **before you spend any time in front of a screen**. Then, if you still want to sit in front of a screen, set a timer for 30 minutes and make yourself turn off the electronics when the timer goes off. Be sure to limit yourself to no more than one hour of combined screen time per day.
- If you really want to get smarter and stronger, turn off the TV and computer for a month. Yes, you can do it. You won't die. I promise. After the initial shock, most people find they even like it.
- If you do use the computer, use it as a tool for making yourself smarter and stronger: write with it, do math with it, do art with it, or explore [www.enchantedlearning.com](http://www.enchantedlearning.com) with your mom or dad. So far nobody has ever gotten smarter and stronger playing computer or video games, and you're probably not going to be the first.

### Creative Arts / Construction

- Knit, crochet, spin, weave, sew, quilt, hook rugs, embroider, tie-dye, beadwork, paint, sculpt.
- Make pottery at a local clay studio.
- Learn new art projects by reading in books or taking an art class. Prepare an art project to teach to the class in the fall.
- Take weaving classes at Hill Country Weavers.
- Work with a knowledgeable adult to build a fence, a doghouse, a bike ramp, a bookcase, a bench, etc.
- Find an adult who has a lot of tools and likes to build or repair things. Learn the names of all the tools the adult has. Learn to write the names as well as say them. Learn what each tool is used for.
- Learn photography – how to take a really good picture.
- Learn how to operate a video camera. Make your own movies. Document a week in the life of your family using a cam-corder or camera. Write a paragraph about each family member and what they will be doing for the summer. Mail the package to your grandparents or some other relative or friend who would like to receive the update.
- Practice your musical instrument or learn new songs to sing. If possible, take private music lessons on your musical instrument.
- Learn a new song to teach the class in the fall. Bring a copy of the words when you teach it to us.
- Learn to dance.
- Get a copy of *Curve Stitching* by Jon Millington and work your way from front to back. You'll be ready to invent your own curve stitching designs next year!
- Visit one of the art museums in town. Visit the gift shop after you've toured the museum. Buy postcards of your favorite works, and try to copy them at home with colored pencils or watercolors.

- Take art classes at Laguna Gloria, Daugherty Art Center, UT Informal Classes, etc.

## **Language / Words / Literature**

- Schedule a weekly trip to the public library. Plan to spend at least an hour looking through books, looking up things in the catalog, reading magazines, etc.
- Take regular trips to bookstores. Make a list of all the good bookstores in town and try to visit each one at least once so you can learn what sorts of book each store offers.
- Read books from the Upper El Reading List. Keep a list of the books and the number of pages you read in each.
- Consider joining a summer reading program at the public library.
- Write a description of a friend, a friend's house, a pet, a favorite place, a vacation spot, etc.
- Interview your family and relatives. Start a family newsletter.
- Enter an essay, story, or poetry contest. Submit your work to magazines that publish student work.
- Practice telling stories. At the library, look for books of folktales from around the world. Pick a few to learn by heart. Plan to tell them to us on the fall camping trip.
- Find a newspaper article you want to read and discuss with your family. Set aside a specific time and place for the discussion.
- Have a family reading time. Everybody reads whatever they want in the same room. Start small: perhaps for 15 minutes after dinner. Gradually increase the time.
- Have a read-aloud time. One person could read while the others clean up from dinner or do some other simple task. Family members take turns being the reader.
- At the bookstore, look for books of crossword puzzles, anagrams, and other word games. Keep a book of word puzzles in the car to work on whenever you are riding around.
- Play great board games such as Scrabble, UpWords (John's favorite), Boggle, or Word Thief.
- Write with your family. Start a family journal. In the journal, keep lists of things to do around the house, descriptions of special events such as hosting houseguests, notes about phone calls to family friends and relatives, anything you want to record from your everyday life. See Peter Stillman's book *Families Writing* for more ideas and inspiration.
- Listen to books on tape while driving around on errands or on vacation. Some places to borrow, rent, or buy books on tape: Austin Public Library (main branch, especially), Earful of Books, major bookstores
- Read and write poetry. Memorize a poem a week.
- Choose a story to practice reading aloud. Practice the pronunciations of all the words. Try giving each character a different voice when you read. Try to use your voice to make the story more interesting to your audience.
- Put on some calming music (Bach, Mozart, Satie, Gregorian chant are nice) and practice making the most beautiful cursive or italic letters you can.
- Instead of phoning, write letters to your friends and relatives. Try starting a round robin letter to your friends or relatives. First, make up a list of 3 – 5 people and their addresses; put your name and address last on the list. Write a letter to the first person on the list, and enclose a copy of the list of addresses. The person you wrote to writes a letter and sends it, your original

letter, and the list of addresses to the next person on the list, and so forth. Eventually, all the letters will come back to you!

- Write a review of a book you read or a movie you saw. Tell the basic idea of the book or movie and what you liked and didn't like about it. What did the author do well? What did they not do so well?
- Learn to touch type (that is, type without looking at the keys or your fingers). You might want to use a software package such as *Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing*.
- If you want to practice spelling in a very structured way, check out the books at the Neuhaus Educational Center website: [www.neuhaus.org/Scientific\\_Spelling/SSample.htm](http://www.neuhaus.org/Scientific_Spelling/SSample.htm)

## **Math / Numbers / Geometry**

- Comparison shopping: figuring price per pound, calling various stores, etc. When you shop at the grocery store, take along a pad and pencil; keep a running total of the cost of items you buy. Check your answer against the cash register receipt you get when you pay for your items.
- Read *The Number Devil* by H. M. Enzensberger. This is an especially good book for people who have not yet learned to love math, but those who have will enjoy the book, too. Every Upper El student should read this book.
- Keep statistics. Graph when you go to bed, how many pages you read each day, how far you walk each day, how many ounces of water you drink per day, how often you have friends over, how long it takes you to eat breakfast, how many meters per day you swim, how fast you can jog around the block, how many multiplication facts you can do in a minute, etc.
- Measure things around the house and calculate their surface area and volume. Take trips to the park, etc., to measure things there.
- Help with the family budget. Record the family expenditures for a week. Help your parents write the checks when they pay the bills (they'll have to sign the checks).
- Play good "thinking" games such as chess and go. Learn how to notate chess games. Learn to play chess by mail with your friends (that's where you mail your moves back and forth on post cards or in letters).
- Make up math problems for yourself to work. Consider making a "Math Workout" for yourself once a week. This will help keep your math skills strong and will allow you to spend your next school year on new, interesting math, instead of re-learning all the math you forgot over the summer!
- Work on memorizing all your multiplication, division, addition, and subtraction facts, if you haven't already done so. Once you've mastered your math facts, work on speed.

## **Nature / Plants / Animals**

- Whenever you travel to a new city, visit the local zoo and aquarium or the local natural history museum.
- Check out the camps and activities sponsored by the Philadelphia Zoo ([www.philadelphiazoo.org](http://www.philadelphiazoo.org))

- Before you travel to another part of the country or to a different country, read about the biomes there. Read about their climate, animals, and plants. While you're there, look for things you read about.
- Go camping with your family or friends.
- Learn more about nutrition. Visit <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/pyramids.html> to learn about the Harvard Food Pyramid. For a week, keep a journal of what you eat. See if you are in balance with the Harvard Food Pyramid. Pick one or two things you can do to start moving your diet closer to the recommendations of the pyramid.
- Make a botany map of your back yard. Place each plant in its place on the map and label each plant with its common name and scientific name. (You might need some help from a library book or a knowledgeable adult gardener.)
- Go berry picking on a local farm

## History / Geography

- Help plan the family vacation. Research the landmarks, geography, culture, special attractions of the area you'll be visiting. Map out the route you'll take.
- Make a map of your house and gardens. Make a detailed map of your room.
- Study world religions. Pick a religion you don't know much about. Read about it in books you check out from the public library. See if you can find a local group that practices that religion. Plan with your parents to visit their church, temple, synagogue, mosque, or other place of worship. Good religions to start with: Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant), Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Unitarianism.
- Check out the classes and events at the Asian American Cultural Center to learn more about Asian languages and cultures. ([www.asianamericanccc.com](http://www.asianamericanccc.com))
- The website at <http://killeenroos.com/link/anchist.htm> links to hundreds of other sites on ancient civilizations.
- Pick a continent you'd like to know more about. (If you can't decide, work on Europe first.) Using an atlas, make flash cards of all the countries in that continent. On one side of the card have the country's name; on the other side, the country's capitol city. Memorize all the countries and capitols in that continent, then do the same for another continent.
- Interview someone from another country. Ask them about their country's history, landmarks, cities, agriculture, industries, religions, festivals, form of government, famous scientists, famous artists and writers, etc. Ask them for permission to tape the interview. From the tape, make notes. From the notes, write a summary of what you learned about the person's country.

## Science

- Check out Family Science Nights at Austin Nature and Science Center.
- Check out the astronomy programs at Wild Basin Preserve or Canyon of the Eagles Lodge. These are sponsored by the Austin Astronomical Society ([www.austinastro.org](http://www.austinastro.org)), and the AAS keeps a calendar of events on their website.

- At the library, look through the children books on science. Choose one that has experiments you can do at home, such as the books by Janice Van Cleave. Try some experiments at home with your parents.
- Consider the books and kits available from Terrific Science ([www.tsbkm.com/](http://www.tsbkm.com/)).

## **Sports / Exercise**

- Play on a team. Practice a sport or physical skill.
- Hiking, biking, skating, swimming, walking, caving, climbing, canoeing, snorkeling, running, gymnastics, basketball.
- Spend as much time outdoors as possible. If your body gets used to staying indoors in the air conditioning all the time, you will be at risk for heat stroke if you do need to do something physical outdoors.
- Work on developing the habit of drinking enough water each day. To find the minimum amount of water your body needs to avoid dehydration, use the following formula: *(your body weight in pounds ÷ 10) ´ 2 = minimum ounces of water you need each day*. You'll need to drink more than that if you are exercising in the heat.
- Download a free book of cooperative games at <http://freechild.org/gamesguide.pdf> . Try these with your friends.
- Check out the rock climbing at Full Court Fitness Center or elsewhere.
- Go canoeing on Town Lake. (You can rent canoes.)
- Check out activities sponsored by Austin Nature and Science Center: caving, canoeing, rock climbing, etc.

## **Community Service / Activism**

- Keep a scrapbook of newspaper articles on issues you care about in the community or world.
- Write letters to elected officials (congresspersons, senators, the President, city councilors, etc.) expressing your opinions about issues you've read about.
- Participate in an environmental clean up. This might be as simple as going to the park with your family or friends and filling up a big trash bag with all the trash you can pick up. Save recyclable bottles and plastic in a separate bag to recycle later.
- Help younger children learn to do something they want to do.
- Visit an elder. Look for opportunities to assist the elderly. Some children call out bingo at a retirement home every other week.
- Volunteer at a local animal shelter or zoo.
- Volunteer at Meals on Wheels.
- Offer to help neighbors with pet sitting, picking up their newspaper when they're out of town, etc.

## **Household Service**

- Help out more with the household chores since you have more time at home. Learn to do some new things such as washing clothes, ironing, folding laundry, polishing furniture,

vacuuming, mowing the lawn (if your parents agree). Work alongside another family member whenever possible.

- Cook together with your family. It can be more fun than cooking by yourself.
- Be responsible for one or two meals per week. Plan the menu with your parent(s). Make a shopping list. Do the shopping. Cook the meal with your parent(s). Try not to use a microwave oven when you cook!
- If you do not know how to make your own lunch, use this summer as the time to learn. Ask your mom or dad to help you learn. Learn how to make one complete, nutritionally balanced lunch. Then start learning how to make other foods to substitute for the foods you know how to prepare. No Upper El student should have to rely on parents to make lunches.