

It is no secret that each year the long Summer Holidays impact on children's academic results as they struggle to retain the learning from the previous year over this extended break. We all need a break and children need time to play, grow their imaginations and friendships, and to foster important relationships in their lives. The big question is how do we as parents allow for this downtime while still helping our children with their learning.

Long Summer days can make early bedtimes harder to maintain. However, it can also provide you with the perfect opportunity as a parent to allow your children to be up that little bit later in the Summer months of the year, while teaching them that unwinding at the end of a busy day with a good book is a wonderful way to have a restful sleep. When presented with the choice of staying up with their lights on and reading a book of their choice or lights out immediately, most children will willingly choose to read. Let's face it if they are choosing to go to sleep then they probably need it. Adjust that quiet book time to a little earlier if needed.

The Summer Holidays brings Xmas, and Xmas means presents to a lot of children. Encourage family to give books, they can even write a special message inside the cover of the book for your child to treasure.

Nothing is more fun than seeing your friends over Summer. Use this as an opportunity to get together and swap books that they have loved to read with their friend. It is not only a cheap way to get more books, but children like to do and read what their friends like. Don't forget that a trip to the library can be a playdate.

Good manners are an important part of life. If people are kind enough to buy a gift, then it is an excellent chance to write a letter/email to them to thank them for the gift. Keep it fun, include a few photos of your child using the gift. This will give your child some ideas to write about as they explain the photos in their letter/email.

If you are heading away over Summer, even for a short while get your child to find out their friends' postal addresses. Nothing is more exciting than heading out to your letter box

and finding a handwritten postcard from your BFF. Plus, you can see if you or the postcard get to your friend's house first.

Summer holidays often mean treats and fun activities. Use this as an opportunity to teach your child the value of money. Explain to them how much your budget is and work together to decide what the money will be spent on. Let them keep a running tally of how much you have spent and how much is left in the budget. Involve them in decisions, such as should we buy lunch out or take a picnic? What will it mean if we spend money on lunch, can we still do an activity too? Get them to pay for the items /entry fees in cash and think about how much change they expect to get back. Did they get the correct change? How can they check? Involve your children when it comes to researching what activity they want to do. Reading about things to do and then thinking about the cost of each one and the implications to the budget is an important life skill. Fights about getting extra things reduce when it is their decision not to spend the money as they want to do another special activity another day.

Get your bake on. Involve your children in the measuring of ingredients. Ask them to work out what time you need to pull things out of the oven. Get them to set the temperature on the oven. Get them to cut the cake into twentieths, or eights. Give them a set amount of decorations for the cupcakes/biscuits/cake and get them to put one sixth of them on each item/slice.

Finally, if your children are old enough, involve them in regularly calculating when you will arrive at a destination given your current spend and the distance to still travel. Yes, you may need to put a sticker over that part of the GPS.

Most of all have fun. Summers are a time for children to build some of their best memories in life.

Claire Howarth

BSocSci, GradDip (Mrkt), GDipTchg (Primary), MEd