

7 EASY learning hacks

for a bright summer!

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The lazy days of summer.

After the year we've all had, there's a tremendous temptation to toss our kids' computers, schedules, check lists and assignment notebooks in the trash. Enough is enough. Kids are done. We're done. Time to kick back and enjoy the lazy days of summer.

But danger lurks. If summer days are consistently lazy – a significant amount of that hard earned learning, will start to leak out. Under normal circumstances, summer brain drain can amount to a significant learning loss, as much as 2 1/2 months per student, with the biggest losses in math and reading. By 9th grade, summer losses are considered responsible for 2/3 of

achievement gap. A year spent distance learning, has created additional concerns about the potential losses that lie ahead.

So how do we make the most of summer? How do we plug the drain and make gains, especially for our right brain creative kids? The key is to make learning hands on, make it visual, add lots of art and time to create and above all – **make it FUN.**

01

Make a **plan**.

As much as your kids may think they don't want to be tied down - they need structure in their day. Allow time for structured learning like reading, writing, and math but don't forget the opportunities for unstructured, creative play. Keeping a healthy balance between structure and free time is a big part of plugging the brain drain.

60 minutes a day to keep the learning loss away...

- **Reading:** 15 minutes each day
- **Writing:** 15 minutes each day
- **Drawing:** 15 minutes each day
- **Math:** 15 minutes each day
- **Lots of creative play:** plenty of time to let their imaginations run wild

Times and chores should be adjusted based on your child's age



02

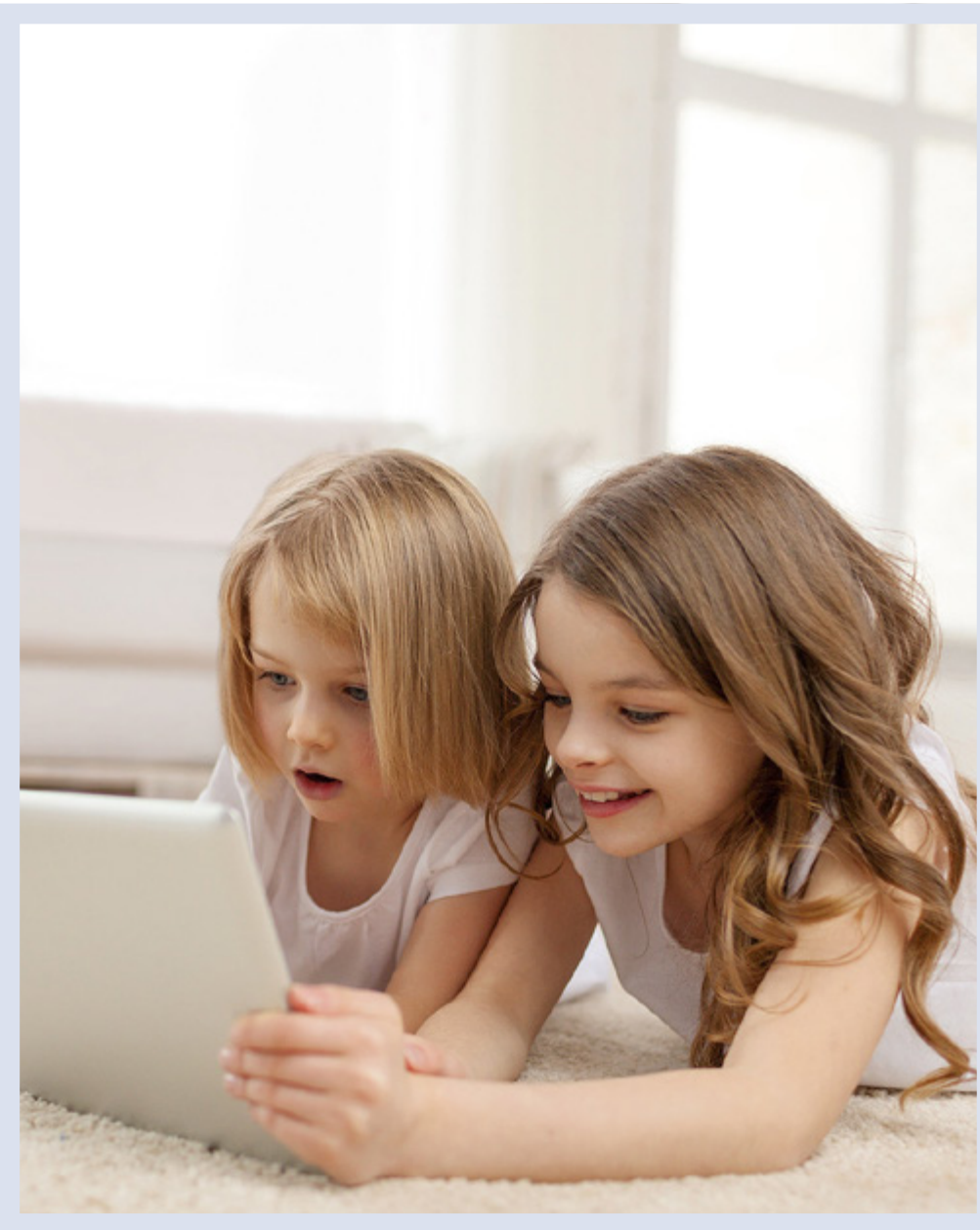
Encourage **reading**.

The best way to keep the brain drain at bay is to continue reading everyday throughout the summer. Just 15 minutes per day of any kind of reading is going to keep them fluent while exposing them to new ideas and ways of reading.



Things you can do...

- Sign up for your local library's **summer reading program** to keep the kids reading all summer. There is usually a theme and prizes to incentivize completion and the requirements are different for each reading level.
- Find a few **audio books** so the kids can get exposed to books above their reading level – by listening. Listening to books lets the kids kick back, enjoy the story and let their imaginations run free.
- Make a plan for your older reader's **summer reading lists** so there's no log jam at the end of the summer. Read the books yourself so you can discuss them with the kids.
- Have a **family book contest**. Organize a family book contest to encourage completion of those summer reading lists. A visual star chart, tracking each members progress is a great reminder for everyone involved, and don't forget some prizes and incentives along the way.
- Set out a **variety of reading material** from poems to magazines and books that cover genres in fiction and nonfiction categories. The key here is to give your child a choice and the time to do it.
- **Watch the movie**. Have a little film and novel class. Many movies are based on books. Read the book then watch the movie or watch the movie then read the book. How do they compare?



Literacy apps for you tech lovers...

Early readers can benefit from time spent on apps. They can make the difference in your child's reading and vocabulary development. There are lots of apps out there that teach the basics like, letter recognition, phonics and sentence sequencing. Since, there are so many different options it can be hard to figure out which ones are the best. With the help of [CommonsenseMedia.org](https://www.commonsensemedia.org) and some other resources, we've curated a brief list of apps for your early reader.

Early readers

- [Starfall \(preK- 2\)](#)
- [Monkey Word School Adventure \(preK-2\)](#)
- [Sight Word Adventure \(K-3\)](#)
- [BOB Books Reading Magic \(K-2\)](#)
- [Montessori Crosswords \(preK-4\)](#) for Apple devices or [Montessori Words & Phonics](#) for Android devices

Older readers

- [Mad Libs \(ages 10-99\)](#) for Apple devices or [Pocket Mad Libs](#) for Android devices

03

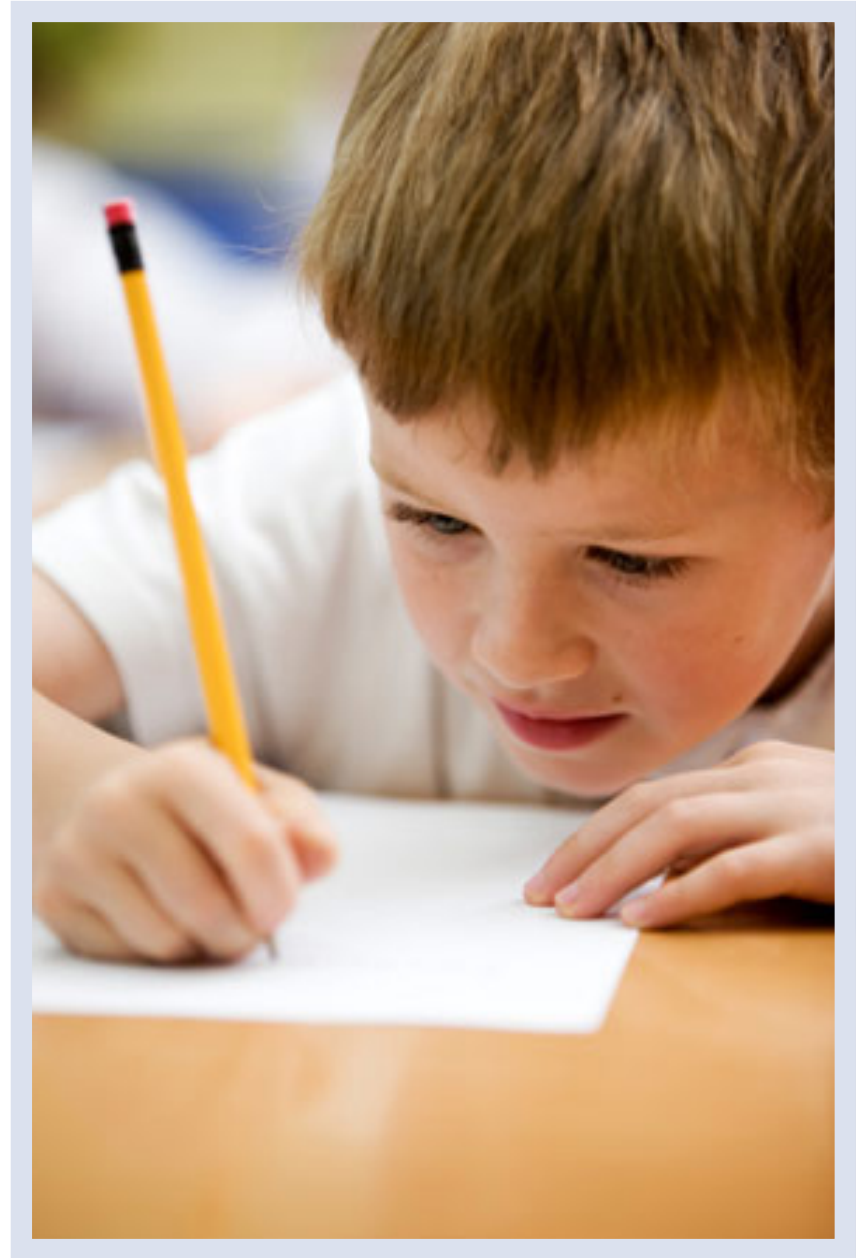
Spark interest in **writing**.

To stop brain drain, kids need to keep writing all through the summer. They need to practice their handwriting and creative writing skills. The key is to keep it fun and light.

Practice handwriting...

Frequent practice keeps handwriting from slipping into illegibility. Summer is also a great time for extra handwriting practice so their handwriting gets better. Better handwriting gives kids unconscious competency so they can concentrate on what they're writing instead of how to write it.

- Encourage daily **journaling**. The kids can write and draw about their activities each day.
- Use our well-designed **handwriting paper** to practice writing letters and sight words.
- Practice handwriting with **7 Days to Better Handwriting**. Each day's activity only takes 5 to 10 minutes. It's fun and easy to do and you'll see some noticeable improvement in your child's handwriting.



Story Starters

I woke up in Minecraft and ...	I opened my drawer and found ...
The window was open so ...	The trees look different today. They have ...
I lost my favorite ...	If a fly bit me I would ...
I climbed to the top of the world and saw ...	
I Flew out my window and ...	
I would like to spend my day as (an animal) because ...	
Lots of people were singing and ...	

Tip: Cut these out and put them in a jar. Have your child pick one every day or two and get the stories started.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

Practice compositional writing...

Creative writing shares many of the same benefits for children as visual arts. It is a wonderful way for your child to use their creative mind and use their imagination. Just a few sentences a day about a topic that interests your child is all it takes.

- Print out the **story starters**. Cut them up. And, put them in a jar so the kids can pick one every day or two and get the stories started.
- Kids can write in a special journal 10-20 minutes a day. Or use our **story paper** for drawing and writing.
- Try the **Read, Draw, Write** activity to improve reading comprehension, story writing and handwriting. It's easy to adapt for any reading level.

04

Make **math** fun!

Kids can lose up to 2 months of math skills over the summer. To stop the summer math drain, it's important that they stay fluent on basic math facts and operations. Take a look at your child's school papers, so you know what they've been working on and what they need to practice. Do they need to drill basic addition and subtraction skills, work on number bonds, practice multiplication and division, understand fractions, etc.?

Fun ways to do math

- **Get cooking** with the kids. They learn to count, measure and divide. Counting eggs, measuring dry ingredients and having “real life” opportunities to experience fractions are far more stimulating ways of learning math than seeing those concepts on worksheets.
- Have the kids **work on math apps** for 15 minutes per day. Apps are a great way to drill those basic math facts while keeping it fun.
- **Play math games.** Most board games have math components, so get one out and have some family game time. Also, logic puzzles – like tangrams, pattern blocks, Sudoku, etc. increase the understanding of math concepts and they're lots of fun.
- **Flashcards** - Have your child help make them. The act of writing the numbers and equations will increase comprehension.



Math apps for you tech lovers...

- [Threes!](#) (6+)
- [Montessori Math: Multiplication](#) (7+)
- [DragonBox Elements](#) (7+)
- [Slice Fractions](#) (8+)

Remember, just 15 minutes per day on these educational apps, will keep them limber.

05

Foster creative play.

Summer is all about creative play and finding ways to continue learning while still having lots of fun and being exposed to new and interesting things.

Here are some ideas to get the kids started in their creative adventures where the limits are boundless.



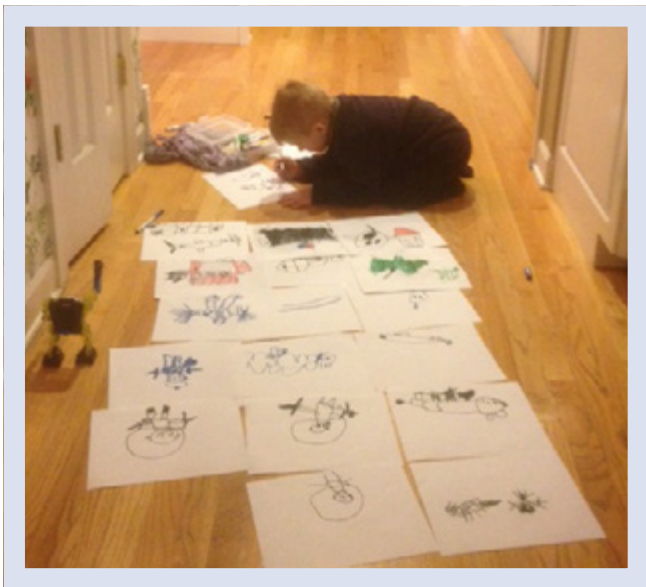
Inspiring ways to promote creative play with your kids...

- **Turn off the TV** – Creativity is not about screen time. Watching television and playing video games are passive activities. And while some television shows and video games can have educational value, you still need to limit your child's screen time.
- **Think outside the box** – the 'box' can be good. The 'box' can provide structure, a framework for doing, for being. But sometimes you need to think beyond the box and step into new territory. Every new invention, new discovery, new way of doing things – came from outside the box.
- **Play outside the box** – To inspire more creative play, shop for things that inspire a different kind of fun. Head to the art and craft store, the army surplus store, scientific shop to find age appropriate props that inspire original thought and increased engagement.
- **Be curious** – Remember what it's like to be a kid and the hunger you had to explore. Spend time with a 2 year old and bugs become really exciting again. Go to a play. Attend the ballet. A concert. Listen to different kinds of music. Find new places to walk. Take a hike. Be adventurous.
- **Listen in new ways** – Invite your child to listen in ways to develop the theater of the mind, where the listener supplies the visuals. Learn to see with your mind and not depend on what others create for you. Get books on tape. Listen to old radio shows like Gunsmoke, The Shadow and Johnny Dollar.



More inspiring ways to promote creative play with your kids...

- **Put on a show** – Encourage talent shows, bike parades and hot lava pits in the backyard. While they revel in creative play, they also learn the value of teamwork, relationships and how to celebrate each other's successes.
- **Be original** – Expose your kids to new artists, different t-shirt designs, alternative kinds of toys and play. Being creative starts with having original ideas. It starts with letting your child be who they want to be.
- **Sing, dance, act, create** – The arts are all about creativity. Exploring, doing and training in ways that build confidence and more doing. Provide lots of materials and opportunities for kids to create on their own and with friends.
- **Play in the junk drawer** – Every house has that one place, a drawer, a basket or the closet where the odds and ends end up; the knob from a broken cabinet, extra batteries, ball of string, odd Lego parts, duct tape... Think of Apollo 13 – what looked like a random pile of junk – but they had to rethink, reimagine its purpose – to create something new.
- **Go outside and get messy** – Kids need time to go outside and play in the sandbox. They need to take a hike. Make mud pies. Dig a hole. Dance in the rain. Once in awhile, let your kids be up past their bedtime. Send them outside and let them play. Let them run. Catch fireflies. Play Holly in the dark. Build a fort. Dig a hole. Make a mess.



06

Provide **drawing** opportunities.

Drawing is a great way to get creative juices flowing for your kiddos this summer. Not only is it good for boosting creativity, but it is a great way for them to document what happens throughout the summer. Not to mention the hidden benefit of keeping their fine motor skills limber to improve handwriting. Have you considered enrolling your child in an On-Demand, Live online or in person summer drawing class? For more benefits that drawing gives your child read, [Drawing is Thinking](#).



Get your kids started...

- Download our [coloring pages](#) and try them at home.
- Use Young Rembrandts [drawing videos](#) to get them comfortable with drawing and teach them how to draw dozens of fun things.
- Sign up for [music lessons](#), [dance class](#) or an [art class](#) so your child can practice their craft regularly, while developing core skills and competency.
- Buy a **sketchbook**! A 8 x 10 tougher-than-tough, 75 page sketchbook is ready for any inspiring ideas your adventurous artist wants to put to paper!
- Get one of our [How to Draw eBooks](#). These books are full of exclusive How to Draw videos of some of your child's favorite things.

07

Learning on the go.

From doctor's appointments for school physicals, waiting in line at amusement parks or riding in the car on road trips, waiting is everywhere this summer. Use the down time to stop summer brain drain. Make a game out of reciting the alphabet or the geography of our country.

Remember, learning games can also be played in the car on road trips. I've added a couple art and movement activities to ramp up the fun factor and keep it visual.

These activities should keep them busy for hours. But just to change it up a bit, don't forget to try the classics like, I Spy and 20 Questions. Keep it light and fun!

Learning games...

- **Back & Forth Drawing**- All you need is a piece of paper and a pencil. One person starts the drawing and then you just take turns adding elements back and forth.
- **Alphabet Train**- Take turns thinking of words that begin with each letter of the alphabet starting with "A."
- **Rhyming**- The first player says a word, and the others take turns rhyming until there are no more words. Simple, fun, and a great game to help with reading!
- **Categories**- Choose a letter and a category, and take turns naming something in the category that starts with that letter. (Example: T and Food = tomato, tortilla, turkey, etc.) When someone can't name something, they're out; keep going until no one can think of anything.

Road trip games...

- **Fun with Maps**- Give your children each a map and let them color, draw on it, highlight your route or use stickers to help them create their own personalized mementos of your road trip. For some math practice, have your child figure out how far it is between each destination.
- **Road Trip Bingo**- Using a picture bingo card, you can combine this classic game with a scavenger hunt and even the little ones will get to participate.
- **Billboard ABCs**- A great way to practice letter recognition is to find the letters on billboards that you pass on the way. Only one letter per billboard though to make the game last. Variation: Use our [sight words lists](#) to find words instead of letters.

Keep having fun.

Keep in mind, summer isn't the only time to use these ideas. Most of these activities are great to use any time throughout the year and can be repeated infinitely to keep the fun in learning. The multisensory approach helps learning stick and can be used as study tools for tightening up concepts that are being taught in school.

Thank you for joining the discussion at *bettefetter.com*. I look forward to helping you and your child achieve higher levels of success and self-confidence at school and in life.

info



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