



Summer Learning Kit

Kindergarten to year 12 Home Activities to Build Math, Literacy, Cognitive, and Social-Emotional Learning Skills

Make Gains While the Sun Shines

Summer slide. Summer setback. Whatever you call it, educational researchers have been studying how academic skills decline over the summer since at least 1906. More than two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become even more crucial to ensure students build the skills they need to succeed and not backslide during the summer.

What can families do to prepare their children to return to school in the 2023?

Summer learning - whether formal or informal - can boost academic, cognitive, and social-emotional development. What do we mean by cognitive skills and social-emotional learning?

Cognitive skills refer to essential skills that sometimes get taken for granted because they're tasks our brains do in the background. These skills often don't get taught explicitly, but they are *essential* to academic success. Here are some examples:

- **Long-Term Memory** refers to the brain's ability to store experiences, events, concepts, or skills and recall them later.
- **Working Memory** is a type of short-term memory that allows our brains to temporarily hold onto and work with information in a related task or activity.
- **Visual Processing** refers to the brain's ability to use and interpret visual information from the world around us.
- **Auditory Processing** refers to how the human brain recognizes and interprets sound, including the ability to hear speech and other sounds.
- **Attention** is the ability to choose, concentrate on, and respond to relevant stimuli while filtering out distractions.

Social-Emotional Learning involves the ways children engage with others while self-regulating to remain as emotionally stable as possible. The **Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)** has outlined the skills necessary for children to be well-adjusted and mentally healthy. Summer learning is an ideal time to develop these SEL skills:

- **Engagement:** Summer learning provides opportunities for students to follow their passions and interests, which will likely increase engagement and fulfillment.
- **Self-Management:** Summer learning offers structure to long summer days, helping children manage their time, thoughts, and feelings.
- **Empathy:** Summer gives kids many social opportunities to build empathy and practice emotional expression and regulation.
- **Self-Direction:** Over the summer, students can choose their own learning goals, which builds independence, confidence, and pride in accomplishment.
- **Stress Management:** When students learn at their own pace and in their way, they feel less pressured to perform than during the school year. Since they aren't focused on results or grades during the summer, students experience more curiosity and joy.
- **Perseverance:** Students will have setbacks during summer learning, just as they do during the school year. But in a low-stress environment, it can be easier to encourage them to persevere.

Whatever your summer plans, share these fun activities with your child(ren) to build **maths, literacy, cognitive, and SEL skills** and prepare them for the coming school year. We have categorised these activities for primary and secondary students.

ACTIVITIES

That's Puzzling

Literacy Math Cognitive SEL

Doing puzzles with your child(ren) is a great way to build pattern recognition, spatial reasoning, perseverance, memory, problem-solving, and concentration. Plus, it's fun!

Get Cookin'

Literacy Math SEL

Build counting, reading, and measuring skills by cooking and baking together. Bonus: you'll be able to eat the results of your learning! Feel free to personalize the activities to include the dishes you and your children enjoy most and the skills that could use the most reinforcement.



DETAILS

- For younger children who are still building basic vocabulary, use spatial language during playtime, such as “beside,” “above,” “below,” “between,” “next to,” “outside,” “to the right,” “to the left,” etc.
- When working on a puzzle, choose a space to fill and offer your child two different pieces, one that will fit and one that won't. Ask them to predict which of the two pieces will fit by looking and testing their choice afterward. As they get older and better at puzzles, you can let them choose their own spaces and search for the right piece.
- Once you have finished the puzzle, ask your younger child(ren) to point to objects that are specific colors or name certain objects and talk about them. For older kids, ask them to make up a short story or song about the picture they've just built.
- Once you have finished a puzzle, ask younger children to specify the quantity of a particular image. For example, you can ask them, “How many trees do you see?” or “What types of animals are there?” Older kids can do internet research about the objects/topics in the puzzle and report back to you. For instance, if the puzzle includes an elephant, they can research where elephants live, their family structure, and food preferences.

Younger Kids (Early Primary)

- **Identify Shapes:** Talk about the shapes of cookies, brownies, fruits, and vegetables. Cut square foods into triangles and round foods into quarters, and practice reassembling them for an early introduction to equivalent parts of a whole.
- **Work on Spatial Reasoning:** Look at measuring cups and spoons together. Let children experiment with how many quarter cups go into one cup, how many teaspoons go into a tablespoon, etc. This experimentation will introduce concepts of measurement and building larger units from smaller units.
- **Play with Patterns:** Cut up fruits and vegetables and have your child(ren) arrange them on a plate in patterns of their choosing. Talk together about size, color, and shape, and ask children to anticipate what should come next in their patterns.
- **Work on Counting:** Ask your child(ren) how many cookies are in a batch, how many chocolate chips are in a cookie, etc. If you're making puffed-rice cereal treats, you can also ask them to count the number of marshmallows in a cup.
- **Practice Alphabetization:** Cut up the ingredients for your family's favorite salad and ask your child to arrange them in rows on top of the lettuce in alphabetical order.
- **Read Recipes:** If your child is reading, have them read the recipe aloud to you and ask questions about anything they find confusing. Cooking/baking vocabulary is often different from everyday vocabulary, so they're sure to learn some new words.

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Back to Nature

Math Cognitive SEL

Nature is full of patterns that increase mathematical understanding and strengthen general sensory awareness. Talk about what you see to build vocabulary and go on a nature scavenger hunt.



DETAILS

Older Kids (upper primary)

- **Scale Up and Down:** Let kids figure out how to double, triple, and halve recipes. This is great for building multiplication and division skills and knowledge of fractions.
- **Weights and Measures:** Let kids experiment with a kitchen scale. They'll engage with addition, subtraction, conversion, density, and volume, among other mathematical concepts. Talk to them about the differences between ounces, pounds, and grams.
- **Telling Time:** Let kids practice telling time and reading a clock in the context of cooking or baking. For instance, you can ask them, "The soup will be done in 35 minutes. What time will that be?" Or, for older kids, you can make the calculations more complex and ask, "If this cake takes 70 minutes to bake, two hours to cool, and 20 minutes to ice, what time should I put it in the oven if I need to take it to the party at 5:00 PM?"
- **Make a Cake:** Teach kids about weight and density by baking a classic cake. They'll see firsthand the difference between a cup of sugar, a cup of eggs, a cup of butter, and a cup of flour.
- **Explore Geometry:** Roll out three identically-sized sheets of cookie dough. Give your child(ren) three differently-shaped cookie cutters, and tell them to make as many cookies as they can, only using one cutter on each sheet of dough. When they're done, ask them which shape yielded the most cookies and why. This is a way to talk about lines and angles.

Print out the [Nature Walk Scavenger Hunt](#) activity sheet, then walk around your neighborhood, a park, or a natural area, and collect the listed items.

- Have your child(ren) sort the collected items by shape, color, or texture.
- Practice simple addition and subtraction with your child(ren) by adding or taking away collected items.
- Find a grassy or sandy spot and use the collected items to make pictures and create stories about them.
- Select an item and talk about its lifecycle: How did it begin? What does it need to grow? What will happen to it when the seasons change?

Summer Activity Sheets Nature Walk Scavenger Hunt

CARNEGIE LEARNING

Walk around your neighborhood, a park, or a natural area, and collect the following items:

<input type="checkbox"/>  a feather	<input type="checkbox"/>  something that starts with the letter "m"	<input type="checkbox"/>  something rough	<input type="checkbox"/>  a pretty rock
<input type="checkbox"/>  a seed pod or acorn	<input type="checkbox"/>  a leaf	<input type="checkbox"/>  something yellow	<input type="checkbox"/>  a clover
<input type="checkbox"/>  something purple	<input type="checkbox"/>  a flower	<input type="checkbox"/>  something fuzzy	<input type="checkbox"/>  a twig or pinecone
<input type="checkbox"/>  something cold	<input type="checkbox"/>  something that starts with the letter "g"	<input type="checkbox"/>  something smooth	<input type="checkbox"/>  something that has a smell

ACTIVITIES

Host an Open Mic Night

Literacy Cognitive SEL

Invite each family member to write a poem, short story, or song. Hold an open mic night where everyone shares what they've written (or performs a favorite poem or song written by someone else). Or, write a one-act play together and have fun performing it. When children can share what they've written, their confidence soars. This activity is great for all ages. For ideas on how to get writing, try these story starters.

Night at the Museum

Cognitive

Whether it features art, nature, history, or science, **taking your child(ren) to a museum** will improve their powers of observation, introduce them to new worlds, and immerse them in learning. For extra engagement, bring along this **museum bingo card**. Both younger and older children will love the challenge of finding everything on the card as they travel through the museum, and siblings may even get a little competitive.

DETAILS

First-Person Prompts

- Some people are scared of cockroaches, bats, or crocodiles. Me? I'm scared of jelly beans.
- I opened my fridge to get a snack. Everything was missing, the back was completely gone, and the fridge led to a dark passageway. I stepped inside.
- Today is one of the biggest days of the year in my suburb: the annual pet parade. My pet is sure to surprise the judges. And everyone else, for that matter.

Third-Person Prompts

- It was the hottest day of the summer. Imagine heard the sound of an ice cream truck, but its tune was different than normal.
- Riley was walking through a dense, deserted forest when he heard a whisper in his ear. "You'll never find it," the voice said.
- The people in the city were hurrying to work that Monday morning when the ground shook and sirens began to screech.

[See All Prompts](#)

Summer Activity Sheets **Museum Bingo** CARNEGIE LEARNING

Have your child(ren) use a pencil or stickers to mark off each item on the bingo board that they find at a museum. If they fill the whole card, maybe a small treat is in order! For extra academic enrichment, ask your child(ren) to tell you something interesting about each new object before they can mark off a square.

Something metal	Something from the 1800s	Something smaller than you	Something you think your friend would like	Something orange
Something from a country other than the U.S.	Someone taking a picture	Something you learned about in school	Something gross or weird	Something that reminds you of another time or place
Something you'd like to learn more about	Something made between 1900-1950	FREE SPACE	Something you don't understand	Something with eyes
Something that looks or feels soft	Something that starts with the first letter of your name	Something you'd love to own	Something that is your favorite color	Something that makes you happy
Someone resting on a chair or bench	Something bigger than you	Something shiny	Something you'd like to have on a desert island	Something that taught you something new

Return to Elementary Activities



Print out the [Museum Bingo Card](#)

ACTIVITIES

Play All Day

Cognitive SEL

Play is the mode through which elementary-aged children make sense of the world, and it's essential to their social, emotional, and cognitive development and well-being. The activity doesn't matter; if children actively playing, they're learning. If you need ideas to jumpstart your child(ren)'s self-directed play, try these ideas that can help develop independence, creativity, confidence, problem-solving, and social skills. Be sure to follow their lead and resist the urge to step in, even if you think they're "doing it wrong." Rather, ask lots of questions to encourage them to develop their ideas and build vocabulary.

DETAILS

1. **Boxes Are the Best:** It's the cheapest toy your child(ren) will ever get, and one of the most fun, too. Kids will think up a million things to do with medium and large boxes. They'll pretend they're boats, houses, spaceships, or stores. If you want to add some extra creativity into the mix, give your kids art supplies and let them decorate the box.
2. **Build Something:** Give older primary school kids hammers, nails, hinges, paint, and wood, and let them make something. When kids make things, they troubleshoot, experiment, and employ basic engineering principles. They could download one of the many blueprints online or just see where their creativity takes them. Supervise as needed.
3. **Play Doctor:** Let your child(ren) play doctor and examine you along with their dolls and stuffed animals. They'll practice interpreting emotional cues and working through social situations. It will also let them practice caregiving skills and foster a sense of achievement from acting as an authority figure. If you describe your pretend symptoms to your child, it will expose them to new vocabulary and also encourage them to take in information and respond appropriately. Household items like popsicle sticks, small flashlights, and kitchen tongs can double as medical instruments.
4. **Dress-Up Time:** it doesn't matter if you dress as knights, princesses, fairies, or superheroes. Just put on a costume and follow your child(ren)'s lead. When children play dress-up, they strengthen working memory, construct hypothetical scenarios, and explore their identity, to name just a few benefits. You don't have to buy expensive costumes. Scarves, bathrobes, towels, and old Halloween costumes work just fine.
5. **Write a Story:** Give older primary and early high school students three pictures of interesting-looking people or places and have them write a story that ties the three pictures together. Mystery stories work great because there will be many unknowns going in, but your child(ren) can write in the genre they enjoy most. Feel free to ask questions to prompt thinking, such as, "Why do you think this person looks so sad?" or "Where do you think this person is going on such a crowded street?" Let your child(ren) run the show.
6. **Host a Party:** Let your child(ren) throw a birthday party for one of their dolls or stuffed animals. They can plan a menu, make pretend or real food, decorate, play party games, and give pretend gifts. This activity will strengthen executive function skills, as children will need to plan and execute a series of activities. It will also build social and emotional skills since they'll be doing something nice for someone else (even if that someone else is just a toy).



ACTIVITIES

Project Time

Literacy Math SEL

Let your older child plan a bedroom revamp. Have them research prices, set a budget, sketch plans, and calculate how much paint they'll need. They'll get a mathematical workout and personalize their space.

DETAILS



The Family That Reads Together

Literacy Cognitive SEL

A family book club will get you all reading and talking more, and it will also help you connect outside of a parent/child dynamic. When forming a family book club, do what works best for your family regarding meeting time and structure.

Summer Activity Sheets
Tips for Starting a Family Book Club CARNEGIE LEARNING

Starting a family book club is a wonderful way to connect with loved ones and celebrate books in a relaxed, low-stakes environment. Book clubs create shared experiences, foster active listening, and carve out time to be together. Below is a flowchart of steps to take when getting started with your own family book club. You know your family best, so use the tips that are most helpful to you.

Choose a Book
Pick a title you all agree to read. Consider everyone's interests and favorite genres. If you have different reading levels, make sure selections are still appropriate for everyone.

Feeling Stuck?
If you're having trouble choosing a title, keep your children's transition topics that would be fun to read about. You might even enjoy book-themed snacks or costumes. High school-aged kids can take the lead and include younger siblings.

Make it Festive
Whether it's while you're done reading the book or are partway through, come together to share your thoughts about the book. You might even enjoy book-themed snacks or costumes. High school-aged kids can take the lead and include younger siblings.

Not Enough Time?
If your family is too busy to set aside reading time, use the first half hour of your evening or weekend to read the book together. You can also read aloud to each other. If your family struggles with finding time to read, listen to audiobooks while driving, exercising, or sleepovers.

Books, Movie Night
If the book you're reading is a movie, watch it together as a family. Movie night will lead to more family time and interesting conversations.

While we want to encourage our children to engage in high-level critical thinking, the main point of a book club is to have fun. If your kids don't respond to your initial questions, transition to simpler ones like, "Who was your favorite character?" "How did that part of the book make you feel?" or "What would you change about the ending?" To keep family book club fun, keep the conversation light. Whatever you end up discussing, everyone will be thinking and, of course, reading!

Tips for Starting a Family Book Club

Starting a family book club is a wonderful way to connect with loved ones and celebrate books in a relaxed, low-stakes environment. Book clubs create shared experiences, foster active listening, and carve out time to be together. Use this [flowchart](#) of steps to take when getting started with your own family book club. You know your family best, so use the tips that are most helpful to you.

Consider Tutoring

Literacy Math Cognitive SEL

Summer is a great time to get your child(ren) individualized help, especially since they won't have to balance tutoring with other schoolwork. An expert tutor recognizes your child(ren)'s strengths and areas for improvement.



ACTIVITIES

Work It

Literacy Cognitive SEL

Your high schooler might want to get a job over the summer, which will give them real-world experience, a sense of responsibility, and new skills. Encourage your teen to seek a job in a field they might be interested in as a future career in order to gain valuable insight into whether they would be happy with it.



DETAILS

Do:

- Give and get help drafting job documents. Help your high schooler with their resume and cover letter.
- Encourage your child to do their research. Encourage your child to research the company's mission, value, and culture.
- Hold mock interviews. Practice with interview questions and help them list their strengths and achievements.
- Help your child cope with failure. Help them not take it personally when their applications get ignored or rejected.

Don't:

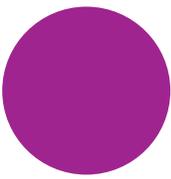
- Be afraid to ask around. Encourage your child to talk to teachers, coaches, and neighbors for job opportunities.
- Force your child to take the first job that comes along. As long as they started looking early, your child can take their time to find the right fit.
- Give up. If you find an organization that seems like the perfect fit but no internship is listed, ask anyway.
- Be scared to self-employ. If you find an organization that seems like the perfect fit but no internship is listed, ask anyway.

[Read More](#)

When it comes to learning,
growing, and having fun,
we hope this is your best summer yet!

Nature Walk Scavenger Hunt

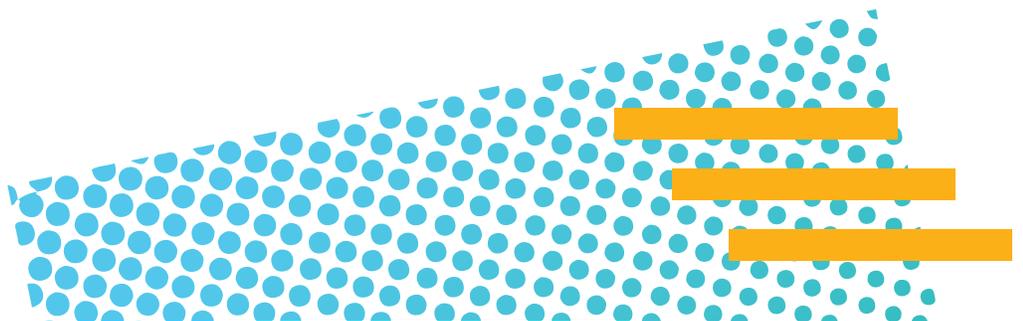
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Open Mic Night Prompts

First-Person Prompts

1. Some people are scared of cockroaches, bats, or crocodiles. Me? I'm scared of jelly beans.
2. I opened my fridge to get a snack. Everything was missing, the back was completely gone, and the fridge led to a dark passageway. I stepped inside.
3. Today is one of the biggest days of the year in my small town: the annual pet parade. My pet is sure to surprise the judges. And everyone else, for that matter.
4. I awoke with a start. As my eyes began to focus, I saw something small and hairy crouching on the bedroom chair. "Hello," it said. "You've been waiting for me, I suppose?"
5. When my sister and I were cleaning grandma's attic, we discovered a thick, leather-bound book buried deep in an old trunk. When we wiped away the dust, we noticed an odd, glowing jewel on the front cover.
6. It was the night of my first performance, and I wanted everything to go perfectly! I grabbed my ballet shoes, and even though I'd worn them the night before, they were suddenly three sizes too small.
7. I was walking home from school when I heard soft laughter coming from behind the woodshed. I decided to investigate.
8. I have always taken care of my parakeet, but that day, he took care of me. It all started when...
9. I opened the carton of eggs to make myself an omelet, but one egg didn't look like the others.
10. I'm always groggy when I wake up in the morning, but there was no mistaking it. I was in a completely different room than the one I'd gone to sleep in. The next thing I knew, there was a knock at the door, and in walked a frog dressed in boots and a long velvet cape.
11. I went to the sink to wash my face. When I looked in the mirror, I screamed, "What did you do to my nose?"
12. I'm tired of being the new kid at school. If I can't find a friend, I'll make one. All I need is...
13. I was in charge of babysitting the class pet for the summer: Winky the bunny. Was it just me, or was Winky getting bigger every day?
14. Unicorns don't exist. Everyone says that. But I know what I saw.



Open Mic Night Prompts

Third-Person Prompts

1. It was the hottest day of the summer. Sheila heard the sound of an ice cream truck, but its tune was different than normal.
2. Carlos was walking through a dense, deserted forest when he heard a whisper in his ear. "You'll never find it," the voice said.
3. The people in the city were hurrying to work that Monday morning when the ground shook and sirens began to screech.
4. Talia expected her morning toast to give her energy. She never expected it would make her disappear.
5. Jerome's cat curled up in his lap and looked at him. "I wish you'd buy me a new scratching post," he purred.
6. There was no question about it. Lee was lost. On top of a mountain during a terrible snowstorm. As he was about to give up all hope of making it home safely, an owl with huge yellow eyes walked down the path toward him and looked Lee squarely in the face.
7. Sheldon didn't think twice about feeding his next-door neighbors' horses while they were on vacation. But then, he noticed a large hole in the ground of one of the pastures. Before he could back away, the hole widened and swallowed him up.
8. Ms. Cooper was everyone's favorite teacher, but the day before Halloween, she noticed an orange notecard on her desk. It read, "Today will be your last day on earth."
9. Every morning, Juanita awoke on a park bench, still dressed in her pajamas. She knew she must be sleepwalking, but she couldn't remember anything other than getting in bed the night before.
10. When Charise rounded the corner of 38th Street, she noticed Mrs. Campbell's broken window. The curtains were billowing in the breeze, but other than that, everything was still.
11. Tyler found an old brass key with a note that read, "For the painting." He looked over at his grandmother's painting of a woman holding a key. Still holding the key, he touched the woman's hand. Quick as a flash, the painting slid to the side.

[Return to Elementary Activities](#) ►



Summer Activity Sheets

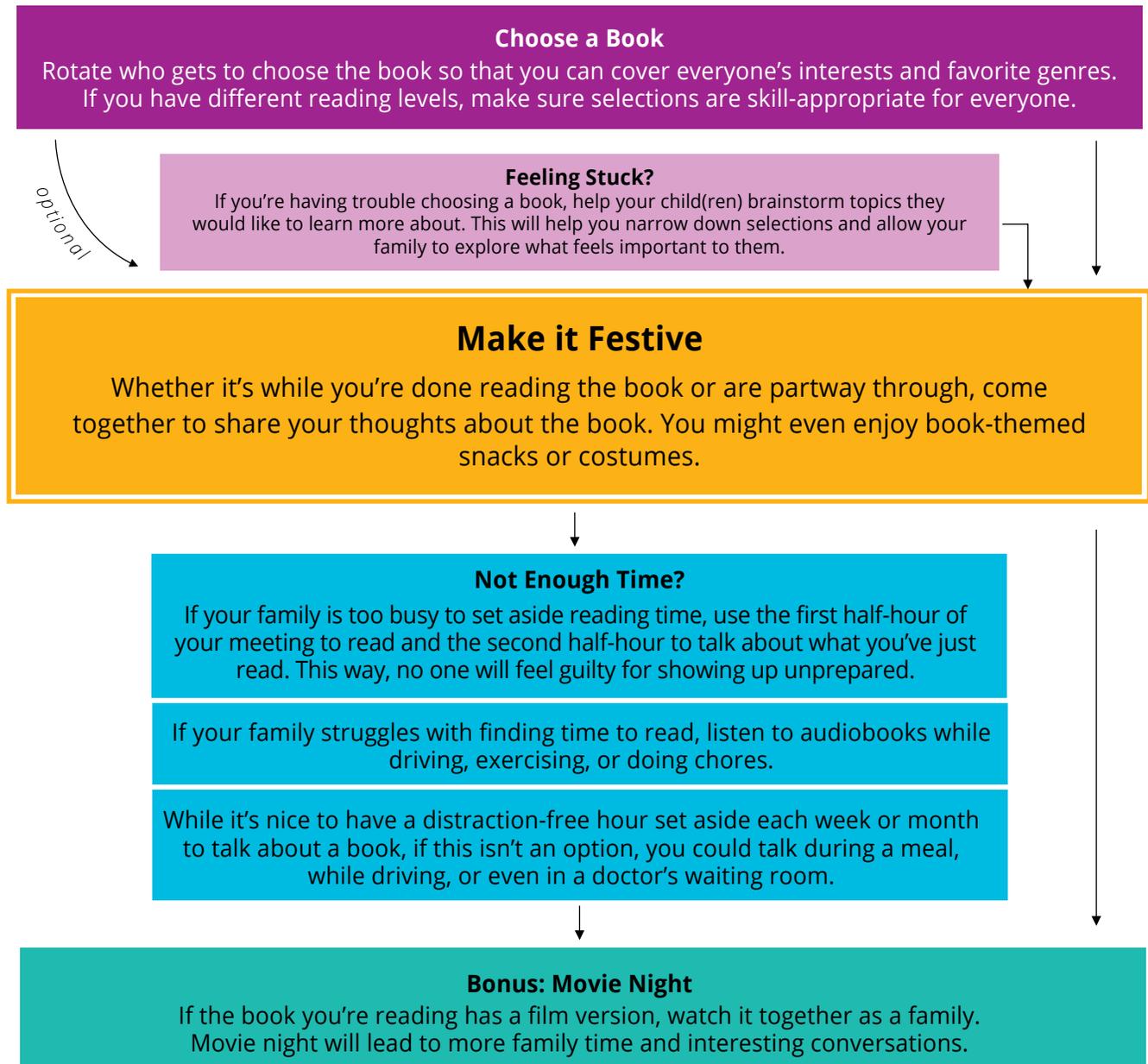
Museum Bingo

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Dos and Don'ts To Help Your Teen Land a Summer Job

Working over the summer can teach your teen new skills and help them make connections that may benefit their future. Here's a list of dos and don'ts for you and your high schooler to keep in mind as you search for the perfect summer job or internship.



Do...

- ✓ **Give and get help drafting job documents.** Help your high schooler with their resume and cover letter—there are many templates online. Also, local libraries and community centers often have job-seeker workshops or staff who can help with job documents.
- ✓ **Encourage your child to do their research.** If your teen needs to write a cover letter, encourage them to research the company's mission, values, and culture so they can write about how they would be a good fit. If they aren't required to write a cover letter, they should do this research before the interview.
- ✓ **Hold mock interviews.** Conduct mock interviews with your teen with interview questions you can google. To prepare, help your child list their strengths and achievements. You can also review the basics of speaking with confidence, making good eye contact, and thanking the interviewer for their time.
- ✓ **Help your child cope with failure.** Help them not take it personally when their applications get ignored or rejected, which some will. Empathize when they feel discouraged, but stay positive and reassure them that the right opportunity will come along.



Don't...

- ✗ **Be afraid to ask around.** Encourage your child to talk to their teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, neighbors, and friends about job opportunities in fields they are interested in. Similarly, see if your contacts might know any.
- ✗ **Force your child to take the first job that comes along.** Encourage your teen to hold out for a job or internship that would truly be a good fit for them and their future goals. As long as they start looking well before summer, your child can take their time in finding the job or internship that is right for them.
- ✗ **Give up.** If you and your teen find an organization or business that seems like a perfect fit, but no job is listed, inquire if they would be willing to hire a summer intern. Many places would be more than happy for some extra help.
- ✗ **Be scared to self-employ.** If your teen is having trouble landing a job from someone else (or even if they're not), you could encourage them to start a business. If they like animals, they could start a dog-walking or pet-grooming business. If they're techy, they could offer to fix computers. The possibilities are endless.

Whatever job your teen lands this summer, you can help make the job search experience one of learning and growth. Once their job has started, check in with your child often to see how it is going, what they are enjoying, and what they find challenging. In the grind of daily work, it can be challenging to take time to reflect, but it is only by thinking about the work they're doing that your teen will learn enough to make informed decisions about their future.