



Parents' Pages

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Summer Reading and Learning

Reading with your children during the summer helps them maintain and build on the literacy skills they developed during the school year. It is important to make reading an exciting part of summer family fun. Reading should be enjoyable, not a chore.

Here are some more ways to make summer reading an adventure for young children:

- Create a reading nook - Set up a cozy space with pillows, blankets and a selection of books that cater to your child's interests. A special reading spot makes story time more inviting and enjoyable.
- Take books outdoors - Bring books to the park, the beach or even the backyard. Reading outside can make the experience more engaging, allowing children to associate books with fun summer activities.
- Act out stories - Encourage children to bring their favorite books to life by acting out scenes. Use simple props or costumes to make the story interactive and memorable.
- Picture walks - Before reading a book, flip through the pages and talk about the pictures. Ask questions about what might happen in the story to build anticipation and comprehension skills.
- Letter and word hunts - While reading, encourage your child to find letters or simple words they recognize in the book. This is a fun way to build early literacy skills.

Local libraries may offer summer reading programs. These programs often include reading challenges, prizes and activities like storytelling literacy events and craft sessions. Reading helps children form positive association with books, fostering a love for stories while building confidence in reading.



Father's Day Activities for Young Children

Father's Day is about celebrating the relationships between dads and their little ones and spending time together. Even young children can take part in fun activities that make the day meaningful while helping them learn and grow. Here are some easy ways to engage children, from birth to age 4, in different areas of development identified in the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#):

- **Physical Development:** Pretend to be different animals. Hop like a bunny, waddle like a duck or stomp like an elephant. Adding animal sounds makes it even more fun! This movement game helps young children develop strength, coordination and balance.
- **Approaches to Learning:** Set up a simple task, like wiping a table or holding a toy screwdriver while you work together to "fix" something. This activity encourages problem-solving, patience and independence while teaching teamwork.
- **Social Development:** Plan a fun and engaging activity for Father's Day, such as creating a clay handprint, Father's Day card or friendship bracelet. Do this as a family or with your child's friends.
- **Language and Literacy:** Set up a cozy reading spot inside or outdoors and read a favorite book together. Encourage your child to point to pictures, repeat simple words or help turn the pages. Reading builds vocabulary, listening skills and a love of books.
- **Mathematical Thinking:** Use blocks, toys or snacks and count them together. Older toddlers can sort objects by color or size. Counting and sorting help children learn early math skills in a fun way.
- **Scientific Inquiry:** Fill a small tub with water. Gather different objects like a spoon, toy or sponge. Make predictions whether each one will sink or float, then test it. This simple experiment teaches children how to observe, make predictions and explore science.
- **Social Studies:** Take a walk together around the neighborhood. Point out places like the grocery store, fire station or park. Talk about what happens in each place and the people who work there. This activity helps children understand their community and the world around them.
- **Creative Expression:** Give your child magazines, colored paper, glue sticks and stickers. Help them cut or tear out pictures of things they love about their dad and arrange them on the paper. Making a collage helps children express their creativity and work on fine motor skills while creating a heartfelt gift.

Summer Opportunities

Summer VPK

Did your 4-year-old attend a VPK program this past school year? If not, they may be eligible to attend Summer VPK or receive services from a Specialized Instructional Services (SIS) provider. For more information, contact your local [early learning coalition](#) to find out if your child is eligible or complete the steps below:

- Apply for Summer VPK on the [Florida Early Learning Family Portal](#).
- Use the [My Florida Schools Portal](#) to identify the best educational program for your child.
- Explore the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) where families can learn more about the skills children should be able to do at the end of their preschool experience.

Summer Bridge

This free program is offered by your local school district to help eligible VPK students get ready for kindergarten by providing additional instructional support emphasizing foundational early literacy skills. Summer Bridge is offered the summer before kindergarten. Your district's Summer Bridge program includes:

- Qualified instructors
- Four hours of face-to-face instruction a day
- Small class sizes
- Developmentally appropriate instruction with a focus on emergent literacy skills

Contact your [school district](#) today to get more information and enroll your child.



Science: Explore and Discover

Children are constantly trying to understand and learn about the world around them. So instead of letting your child take a break from learning and other “school stuff,” use the summer to encourage them to learn more about science by finding fun outdoor activities that will help them continue to practice skills learned in school.

Outdoor adventures are a wonderful and healthy way to provide real-world experiences for your child. One way to explore the science of the outdoors can be to visit one of Florida’s many butterfly gardens.

The following are ways you can help your child learn, based on the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#), when visiting a butterfly garden:

- **Peruse the printed materials.** Select a brochure to learn about the various activities and read the signs at the exhibits. Observe the pictures and help your child find words they recognize. **(Emergent Reading)**
- **Use their senses to observe and experience the environment.** Use the brochure to find different scientific characteristics of butterflies. You can look at and classify them by different species, colors and the plants that attract them. Ask questions such as “What colors are the butterflies?” or “Which plants do the butterflies visit the most?”. **(Scientific Inquiry)**
- **Encourage interaction.** Discuss the life cycle of the butterfly as you find caterpillars crawling about, a chrysalis hanging or maybe even watch a butterfly emerging for the first time. You can extend the activity at home by drawing and labeling the life cycle that was observed. **(Life Science)**
- **Engage in conversation.** Follow what sparks your child’s interest by asking and responding to questions. **(Conversation)**

Walking together outdoors offers opportunities to inspire learning about nature and science. Give your child a bag and ask them to search for items such as rocks, leaves, sticks, shells and pinecones. After they have completed their collection, have them sort and count the items in the bag.

Spending time outdoors will support your child’s development and well-being. During your adventures, take pictures showing all that you have learned together. Place the pictures in a photo album and help your child write about each photograph.

Learn About the Division of Early Learning’s Programs

In partnership with 30 early learning coalitions and Redlands Christian Migrant Association, the Division of Early Learning (DEL) administers the following programs:

School Readiness (SR)

Florida’s SR program offers financial assistance to help children from at-risk and low-income families receive high-quality child care and education while their parents work or participate in job training. The program gives children access to an educational environment that encourages early literacy and activities based on the [Florida Early Learning Developmental Standards](#) to help children meet expected milestones. The program recognizes parents and caregivers as their child’s first teacher by providing information about child development and family well-being. Approximately 210,000 children participate in the SR program annually. Contact your local [early learning coalition](#) to find out more about the SR program or visit the [Family Portal](#) to apply. You can enroll your child, up to age 13, in the SR program at any time.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)

If your child is a Florida resident and turns 4 on or before September 1, they are eligible to attend VPK. Approximately 155,000 children participate in this free early education program annually to prepare them to enter Kindergarten ready for school. To apply for VPK, access the [Family Portal](#) to complete an application. Contact your local [early learning coalition](#) to find out more about VPK providers in your area. Enrollment for the 2025-26 year is open.

Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R)

The CCR&R State Network provides information on how to select quality child care options and early learning programs such as SR, VPK, Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Home Instruction for Parents of Preschoolers. Local CCR&R offices also have information about financial assistance options and community resources to support your family. Over 375,000 families receive CCR&R services annually. Contact your [early learning coalition](#) or DEL at 1-866-357-3239 for assistance.



Water Safety Awareness

Florida is known for its warm weather, sunny skies and cool ocean breezes. Families can find an assorted range of summer activities like swimming, fishing, kayaking and other water recreational activities at beaches, lakes and pools. With the abundance of water-based fun, it's crucial for parents to prioritize water safety.

Children should always be supervised when around water, even if there are lifeguards present. That means putting down books and cell phones.

Here are some essential water safety tips:

- Follow safety procedures and precautions posted around pools and other swimming areas.
- Always designate an adult to watch children.
- Never leave children unattended near any water.
- Take a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) course to learn lifesaving skills.
- Check local weather and water conditions before heading out, especially to the beach.
- Know your child's limits. Don't ever push beyond their swimming abilities and take breaks as needed.
- Discuss water safety with your child and consider enrolling your child in swimming lessons.

Stay alert and be prepared! By following these tips, you can help ensure a safe and enjoyable time around Florida's waters.

For additional information on water safety, visit the Florida Department of Children and Families [Water Safety Tips](#) website.

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Family Fun Water Activities

Water Painting: Gather paintbrushes, washable paint and a bucket of water to create artwork under the sun. Let your child paint with the washable paint on sidewalks, driveways or fences.

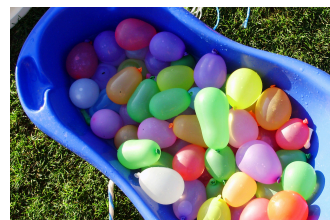
Sensory and Fine Motor Play: Set up two large plastic bowls or bins outside and fill with water. Choose items to place in the bowls or bins such as cubed ice, small plastic toys, sponges and other items that can get wet. Your child can use their hands, spoons, cups and tongs to manipulate the items in the bin. For fine motor skill practice, have them transfer the items from one bin to another.

Water the Flowers: Take chalk and draw flowers on the sidewalk with letters and numbers in the center of the flower. Give your child a watering can, plastic water jug or bottle and water the flowers according to which letter or number you call out.

Water Balloon Games: Fill balloons with water and gather them in a bucket. Go outdoors and take part in water balloon games with your family. Try these activities:

- Balloon Toss – Line up closely across from each other. Toss the balloon and take a step back after each toss. See how far apart you can go before the balloon drops.
- Penguin Races – Place a water balloon in between your knees and waddle to a pre-determined finish line. If your balloon pops, start over at the beginning.
- Hot Potato – Standing in a circle, play music and toss the balloon from person to person. When the music stops, whoever catches the balloon last, is out. The last person standing is the winner!

Find more physical, motor and sensory activities for your child under the Physical Development Domain in the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#).



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Early Learning
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