

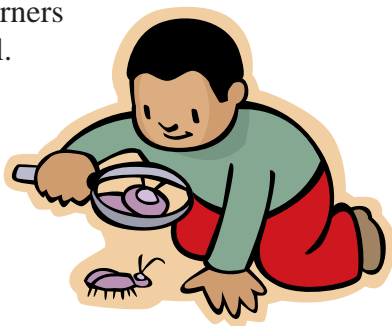


Grandparents as Parents: Out-of-School Learning Opportunities

“I’m bored!” is a phrase many of us hear on those hot summer days when school is out. It can be challenging to be creative in finding fun and interesting activities for our grandchildren.

It is possible to have fun and be educational at the same time. Research shows that when adults are actively involved with children’s learning at home, the children become more successful learners in and out of school.

The earlier you begin working with your grandchildren, the more responsive they will be to learning.



Children are eager learners. They are interested in everything around them. Here are some easy activities, developed by the Home and School Institute, that will encourage their active involvement and promote self confidence as they learn. For more information on other publications to help your grandchildren learn, call 800-USA-LEARN at the U.S. Department of Education.

Kindergarten – Third Grade

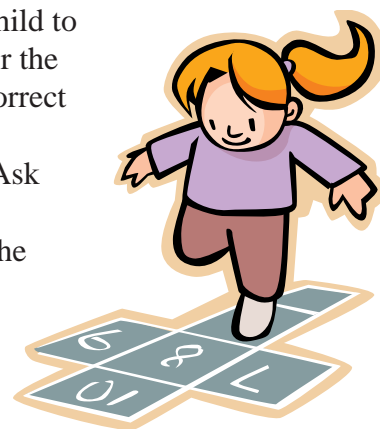
Sorting and stacking. Teach children to classify with dinnerware. Ask your grandchild to match and stack dishes of similar sizes and shapes. Also have the child sort flatware, such as forks with forks and spoons with spoons. This is similar to recognizing the shapes of letters and numbers.

Telephone time. Let your grandchild practice reading numbers left to right by dialing a telephone. Make a list of telephone numbers your grandchild can read—relatives, friends, time and temperature—and let the child make a call or two.

Let ’em eat shapes. Cut bread into different shapes—rectangles, triangles, squares, and circles. Make at least two of each shape. Ask your grandchild to choose a pair of shapes that are alike. Help the child put jelly and peanut butter on the pieces, and make a sandwich. This is a snack plus a game to match shapes.

Dress me. Help increase your grandchild’s vocabulary. Teach the name of each item of clothing your grandchild wears when the child is dressing and undressing—shirt, blouse, sweater, sock, and shoe. Then print the words on paper, and ask your grandchild to attach these papers to the clothes in the closet or drawers. Also, teach the body parts—head, arm, knee, and foot. Make a pattern of the child lying on a large sheet of paper. Tack the paper to the wall, and ask the child to attach the words for the body parts to the correct location.

Hidden letters. Ask your grandchild to look for letters of the alphabet on boxes and cans of food and household supplies. For



example, find five A's or three C's on cereal boxes, soup cans, etc. Start with easy-to-find letters, and build up to harder ones. Then have your grandchild write the letters on paper. This will build reading observation skills.

Comic strip writing. Use comic strips to help with writing. Cut apart the segments of a comic



strip, and ask your grandchild to arrange them in order. Then ask your grandchild to fill in the words of the characters (verbally or in writing).

Disappearing pictures. On a warm day, take your grandchild outside to the driveway or sidewalk, and give the child a pail of water and a brush. Encourage the child's creativity in drawing or writing with the water. Let your grandchild tell you about his or her artwork.

Napkin fractions. Make fractions fun. Fold paper towels or napkins into large and small fractions. Let the child start with halves and move to eighths and sixteenths. Magic markers can be used to label the fractions.

Weigh me. Teach estimating skills by asking your grandchild to guess the weight of several household objects—a wastebasket, a coat, or a full glass of water. Next, have the child estimate his or her own weight, as well as that of other family members. Use a scale to check the child's guesses.

Ice is nice. Help improve observation and questioning skills by freezing and melting ice. Add water to an ice cube tray, and set it in the freezer. Ask your grandchild how long it will take to freeze. For variety, use different levels of water in different sections of the tray. Set ice cubes on a table. Ask your grandchildren how long they will take to melt. Why do they melt? Place the ice cubes in different areas of the room. Do they melt faster in some places than in others? Why?

Float and sink. Use several objects, such as soap, a dry sock, a bottle of shampoo, a wet sponge, and an empty bottle. Ask your grandchild which objects will float when dropped into water in a sink or bathtub. Let the child drop the objects in the water, one by one, to see what happens. Encourage guessing, which is another way of saying the child is scientifically hypothesizing!

What does it take to grow? Teach cause-and-effect relationships. Use two similar, healthy plants. Ask your grandchild to water one plant and ignore the other for a week or two. Keep both plants in the same place. What happens?



Snack Smart

Nutritious snacks can help people of all ages meet their daily nutrient requirements. Snacks are important for every age group, because each age group has different nutritional requirements and lifestyles. Snacks should be considered a part of your grandchildren's daily food intake. With children's small stomachs, they should not wait several hours between meals.



Whatever the age group, a snack should provide nutrients without excessive sugar, fat, cholesterol, or sodium.

Snacks are best eaten one to two hours before a meal to avoid ruining the child's appetite at meal time. Be sure after-school snacks are eaten well in advance of the evening meal. Limit the amount eaten so the snack does not replace a meal.

Grades 4–5

Street smarts. Gather maps and schedules to a special place in your area—a zoo, a museum, a baseball stadium. Let your grandchild plan a trip for friends or family. Determine the travel time required, the cost, and the best time to make the trip. This puts the child’s reading and analyzing skills to practical use.

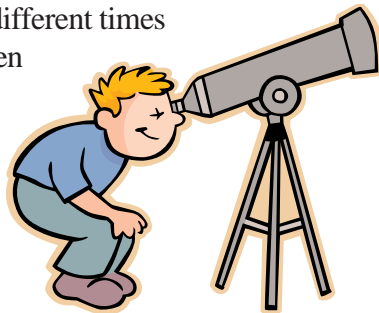
TV and the world. Connect current events to TV viewing. Post a world map next to the television set. Watch the news with your grandchild, and have the child locate world news spots. Keep reference books, such as dictionaries and the world almanac, close by. In this way, the child find answers to questions when his or her curiosity is high. Catch that teachable moment!

Picture stories. Develop imagination and creativity. Have the child select four or five pictures from magazines and newspapers, and put them together to tell a story. Ask your grandchild to number the pictures one, two, three, etc. First, ask the child to tell the story with the pictures in numerical order. For variety, have the child rearrange the pictures and tell a new story using this different arrangement.

Writing instead of talking. Exchange notes instead of words at different times during the day—when getting up in the morning, at dinner, at bedtime, or whenever the noise level gets too high.

Day-by-day calendar. Turn a large calendar into a personalized family communication center. Have your grandchild fill in the blanks with morning messages, weather reports, birthdays, special activities, or a note to the family.

A trip to the supermarket. Ask your grandchild to choose a dish to prepare for a meal, such as a pudding, a salad, or a sandwich. Have your grandchild check to see what supplies are on hand, and make a shopping list. First, let the child decide which items are the best buys and make selections. Also have the child write the price of each item on the list, and if possible, figure the total. Afterward, the child can check the prices against the sales receipt.



On the move. Sharpen math skills on trips. Use even short trips around town. For example, at the gas station, ask your grandchild how much gas you needed and the cost per gallon. On the highway, ask your grandchild to read the signs and check the different speed limits. Then ask the child to watch the speedometer readings and notice how fast or slow the car is going. Have your grandchild estimate distances between cities and check the estimates on a road map.



Newspaper math. Let your grandchild find the weather section in the newspaper to check temperatures across the nation and the world. This is good geography practice, as well. Discuss baseball and football scores and averages on the sports pages. Who has the high scores? What are the percentages?

History time line. Record history at home. Stretch a roll of paper along the floor. Use a ruler to make a line about three feet long. Ask your grandchild to fill in the important dates in his or her own life, starting with the child’s birth. Family members familiar with U.S. history could fill in other major dates. Display the finished time line in a special place for all to see.

The foreign touch. Travel overseas at home. Visit ethnic shops, food stores, and restaurants in your community. Before the trip, have your grandchild find on a map the different countries you will “visit.” After the trip, encourage your grandchild to talk about what he or she saw.

Grades 6–8

Read all about it. Introduce your grandchild to the many kinds of information in the daily newspaper. Ask the child to find the pages containing news about government leaders, editors’ opinions, weather reports, car sales, house and apartment rentals, and want ads. Discuss how to use this information.

Nice words. Make someone happy. Write each family member’s name on separate sheets of paper. Fold each paper, and put it into a bag. Ask each person to choose a paper from the bag.

For inspiration . . .

When the artist is alive in any person, whatever the work may be, he or she becomes an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressing creature.

Robert Henri

Each person can add a note or a drawing to the paper that they pulled from the bag, such as “I like the way you make breakfast,” or “You make me happy when you do the dishes.” Place the notes where they can be found by family members . . . and watch the smiles!

Pro and con: What do you think? Make a family game of discussing a special issue, such as, “Teenagers should be allowed to vote,” or “There should never be any homework.” Ask your grandchild to think of reasons that support his or her views. Then ask the child to think of reasons against his or her views. Which views are most convincing? For variety, assign family members to teams, and have teams prepare their arguments pro and con.

How much does it cost? Put math skills to work. Help your grandchild understand living costs by discussing household expenses with him or her. For example, make a list of monthly bills. Fold the paper to hide the costs, and ask your grandchild to guess the cost of each item. Unfold the paper. How do the estimates compare with the actual costs? Was the child close?

Let your voice be heard. Promote good citizenship by helping your grandchild write letters to the editors of local newspapers about issues affecting children. For example, suggest a bike path be built near the school or that a city event be planned for children. Children are citizens, and their ideas are worth hearing.

Out-of-School Blues: We Need a Break!

Everyone needs an occasional break from the routine of being at home. Check out the activities offered in your community. You may be surprised at the variety of activities available that

are reasonable in cost and fun for your grandchildren.

Camps. Whether choosing an overnight or day camp, keep in mind your grandchildren’s interests. 4-H, YMCA, schools, churches, and civic organizations often have camping opportunities geared toward building skills and talents or geared toward specific subjects, such as environmental camps.

Classes. Swimming, art, golf, tennis, and karate are just a few of many programs you may find. Often, libraries have special programs at low or no cost for children of all ages.

Recreational activities. Local parks departments may sponsor organized sports activities. Soccer, baseball, and fishing are just a few sports sometimes offered. Ask for a schedule of events.

Arts and entertainment. Local arts councils often sponsor plays, concerts, and “arts in the park” activities to promote cultural awareness.

Tourism promotions. Contact your local tourism commission. Find out what points of interest are promoted in your area, and obtain a schedule of season highlights. Many state parks offer free entertainment and activities during tourist seasons.

Historical attractions. Check out the history of your area. Often there are tours, festivals, and programs celebrating historical events.



See the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Grandparents Raising Grandkids website for more information:

<http://grandparentsraisinggrandkids.tamu.edu>

Permission was granted by Dr. Sam Quick, Human Development and Family Relations Specialist, Kentucky Cooperative Extension, to adapt this material for use by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Adapted by Dr. Judith L. Warren, Gerontology Specialist; and Dr. Dorothy James, Family Life Specialist (retired), Family Development and Resource Management, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, The Texas A&M System, College Station, Texas.

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