



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Top 10 Summer Learning Tips for Parents: Say Goodbye to Kids' Summer Slump -- Learn Anytime, Anywhere

***-- Summer Learning Activities from the Educators at Connections Academy,
Leading Virtual School --***

BALTIMORE (June 1, 2010) -- What child doesn't look forward to summer vacation? It's a time to get outside, ride bikes, swim, play with friends, and... take a break from school. But unfortunately, it's also a time when children experience learning losses if they don't engage in educational activities. Educational research shows that students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer¹.

But there is good news for parents, say educators from [Connections Academy](http://www.ConnectionsAcademy.com) (www.ConnectionsAcademy.com), a leading virtual school known for its innovative and flexible learning approach. There is a wealth of fun, educational resources available -- for free -- that can help parents keep their students sharp this summer. Parents can take advantage of some great Internet sites, but should remember favorite, 'tried and true' learning activities, like reading books or exploring a museum together.

"With a little planning and insight, students can learn anytime and anywhere this summer whether you're at home, on a road trip, or visiting friends and family," notes Dr. Patricia Hoge, Connections Academy's Vice President for Curriculum. "Keep things interesting and think *variety*. At our virtual school we find that students really respond to a mix of both online and offline activities, activities done in the home and in the community, as well as activities that they can do at their own pace or with a group."

Dr. Hoge reminds parents to keep things in perspective this summer. "When it comes to summer learning, a little goes a long way," Dr. Hoge observes. "Investing an hour or even 30 minutes each day in educational activities will give your child a big advantage come September. Educational opportunities are all around, but sometimes you just need to know where to look or how to look at the things around you. [Connections Academy](http://www.ConnectionsAcademy.com) is a virtual school where students learn from home -- so our [teachers](#) are particularly attuned to learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom. We are pleased to offer some of their can-do ideas to help you on your way."

¹ White, 1906; Heyns, 1978; Entwisle & Alexander 1992; Cooper, 1996; Downey et al, 2004.

Here are Connections Academy's "Top 10 Summer Learning Tips" for parents seeking free resources to incorporate learning into summer fun:

1. Play Ball! – Let America's favorite pastime give your kids a mental workout this summer. [The Science of Baseball](#) is a free web site that offers fun and interactive games (test your reaction time, the science behind a home run) as well as some great historical information (the girls of summer). An entertaining alternative when the game is rained out!

2. Drive Home Math and Spelling Skills

Yes, a fifteen minute car trip is just enough time to get your NPR fix but... it is also a great time to review math problems and spelling words. Play a game with your student and spell as many summer-related words as you can. Or challenge them by asking how many addition or subtraction problems they can solve in the time it takes to drive to the grocery store. Create a routine and keep track of how much you spend with this activity – you'll be amazed at how much practice time you'll rack up.

3. Visit a Museum... Online

More and more of the world's great museums are offering exciting online experiences. From art and science to natural history, the Web has made a "visit" possible when a trip to the big city is not. The Smithsonian offers a [Library and Archival Exhibitions on the Web](#) searchable database to help you find all sorts of interesting exhibits. For example, explore the collection at the [Museum of Modern Art](#) in NYC or check out CT scans of a 2,500 year-old mummy at the [Museum of Science in Boston](#). And learn everything you want to know about baseball from the [Library of Congress](#).

4. Show Me the Money!

Commence Operation Piggybank. Money is a tangible and fun way for students to explore math. Challenge your younger student to count the money in your wallet or ask them to point out the items that they could/would buy with \$5 at a local shop. If your child does not have a piggy bank, encourage them to make and decorate one and keep track of their finances over the summer. Connections Academy offers a nifty interactive [Lemonade Stand](#) – an online math game that examines supply and demand while building estimation and calculation skills.

5. Take a Virtual Vacation

No plane ticket? No problem! Sometimes half the fun of a vacation is planning the trip itself. With your child, decide upon a fabulous destination then research the location at the library and online. Consider things like, the best time to visit and the local currency and how much money is needed for your fantasy trip. Read up on the history and cuisine. Finish the project with a "destination evening" -- cook a regional dish and present the details of the trip to friends and family. Visit the travel website www.lonelyplanet.com to get started!

6. Read Every Day

No list of summer learning activities would be complete without reading. Reading with a child is one of the most educational and enjoyable pastimes around. Your local library is a valuable resource and often will host special events throughout the summer. Make sure that you and your child have a library card and explore the shelves together. Take turns reading to each other and, if it is not already part of your bedtime routine, set aside 30 minutes each night to *get into a good book* with your child. And don't forget to sign up your young reader for free motivational programs like www.BookAdventure.com that reward her with prizes for her reading accomplishments.

7. Listen to a Story – Even on your iPod or iPhone

You probably know that your whole family can listen to great literature together, thanks to the many recorded books you can check out for free from your local public library. These are great choices for long family road trips or vacations. But did you know that your iPod-toting teen or tween can also listen to great literature on-the-go, wherever he is? Lots of free literature podcasts are available for everything from Aesop's Fables to Zola. Visit the podcast directory <http://www.openculture.com/freeaudiobooks> to pick the perfect literature podcasts for your child this summer.

8. Family Game Night – Set aside one night a week for family game night. Chess supports youngsters' analytical and problem-solving skills, and scrabble helps boost spelling and vocabulary skills. You can play the board game, or even play free online versions, if your 'plugged in' students prefer. And every day, you can add magnetic letters to your fridge or play with [Connections Academy's virtual version](#) .

9. Hit the Park – Take a family field trip to a local park or historic site. Kids love animals and nature, and can learn lots about science while having a ball. Don't forget to ask park officials if they have any free student guides or activities for your kids. Many historic sites stage re-enactments of battles or life in time gone by – school, home life -- that really bring history to life for youngsters. Your family can also visit some of our nation's most popular national parks, like Yosemite, without even leaving home, thanks to free sites like www.yosemite.org,

10. Blast Off! to Outer Space – Visit your local science museum or observatory to learn about astronomy with your kids. Then visit www.NASA.gov, a treasure trove of free science activities, information and videos for kids. There's even a game area, indexed by grade level,

Listen to Connections Academy's [Learning Everyday podcast](#) for more great ideas. And visit the [Connections Academy blog](#) to share your summer learning tips with other parents.

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About Connections Academy

Connections Academy is a leading national provider of high-quality, highly accountable virtual public and private schools in the U.S. for students in grades K–12. Connections Academy schools deliver top quality, personalized education for students that combines certified teachers, a proven curriculum, technology tools, and community experiences to create a supportive and successful environment for children who want an individualized approach to education. In Connections Academy's Personalized Performance Learning® approach, students use daily lesson plans and curriculum materials provided by Connections Academy. Teachers develop a learning plan for each student, whose progress is tracked through a proprietary, web-based Learning Management System. During the 2009–10 school year, Connections Academy served students in Arizona, California (Southern and Central), Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming through its public school programs. It serves students in all states in the U.S. through the online private school, National Connections Academy. New public school programs will be added in the 2010–11 school year. Connections Academy offers grades K through 12, though some schools do not offer all grades. For more information, call 800-382-6010 or visit www.ConnectionsAcademy.com

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