

## **How to Learn (and have fun at it) Over the Holidays**

We worry that we will overburden our kids if we get them to do some extra work over the Holidays. We shouldn't be so concerned. Yes, our kids do need a break, but don't forget that learning should be fun. The best way to deal with the Holidays in terms of learning is to give your kids a break from the regular learning routine, and embrace something a bit different. This article will give you a few ideas.

### **Learning on the Go**

Many of us travel at this time of year, and travel is a great opportunity for learning. Not only is there plenty of time on the road, in the airport, or on the plane, but there's also a new environment to learn about. We increasingly rely on tablets, phones, iPads and the like to entertain our kids and keep them quiet in public places. One trick is to starve your kids of video time in the weeks leading up to the trip, as they can then splurge on their video time. Unfortunately much of what our kids do on these tablets is rather mind-numbing at best. Try to load up on educational apps before you go. Take advantage of your possibly rare time together when on the road and quiz them verbally on their times tables, their arithmetic, their spelling, and the like. Almost anything can be used for inspiration, including billboards on the side of the freeway. Discuss the book that your kid is writing a book report on!

### **Once you Arrive**

When you get to where you're going, be sure to take the opportunity to educate your kids about it. It doesn't have to be far. We've had some great learning opportunities in Palm Desert for instance. Our kids loved the [Coachella Valley History Museum](#). It was a great value and our kids learned much more than they would have with another afternoon around the pool. Ideally you can educate your kids about where they're going before you go. When travelling internationally, it would be a real shame not to, but many of us just don't have the time. So look for fun local opportunities to learn more when you get there. This will really enrich the trip for all of you. Even art museums can be fun for kids - if you're ever in London don't miss the [Tate Modern](#). It's free and very entertaining.

## Family Game Nights

Many of us will be staying home and enjoying some quiet time (and not) around the house. The Holidays are a great time to dig into games like Monopoly, or the Allowance Game for younger kids (Monopoly can drive some kids to fits of rage, so be careful!). These games are excellent for teaching kids about money and the like. We often give board games to the kids and then play them together. Almost any board game has an educational aspect to it. [Lakeshore Learning](#) has many explicitly educational board games if you are looking to expand specific skills in a fun way. No matter what, make sure you have fun and revel in the extra time you have with your kids.

## Reading by the Fire, by the Tree

The Holidays have their own stories to tell. Don't forget to tell them! Take advantage of the Holidays to read Christmas stories, Hanukkah stories, and the like. If your child is able to read well on their own, have them read a story to their younger siblings or to you. Depending on everyone's age, the Holidays are a great time to model reading behavior to your kids. Take the time to sit down together and read quietly.

## Delegate the Teaching

Why not have your older siblings teach their younger siblings? We have experimented with having our 8 year old son teach his younger 4 year old brother. It's a great opportunity to correct mistakes with the 8 year old as well! For example we had our older son teach him the alphabet sounds, and how to blend basic letter sounds together. Our 4 year old found this to be much more appealing than working with us.

## Delegate the Holiday Cards

Think of things that you might be able to delegate to the kids. For instance we've had our eldest son work on his writing by penning some Christmas cards to family. This was great for practicing his writing and spelling. When mailing the cards out, take advantage of the opportunity to show them where the cards are going to (use [Google Maps](#) for instance).

## **Grocery Shopping**

When you are out getting all the goodies together for the big meals, review things like weight and pricing with your kids. Come up with questions like, how much will 3 pounds of apples cost me? Get them to weigh out the apples using the scale. Point out that the scale measures both pounds and kilos, and get them to figure out how many kilos are in 3 pounds, for instance. Kids often enjoy talking about prices. Have them try and figure out which similar items are cheaper, depending on their Math skills. For example a small tube of toothpaste on sale might be cheaper by weight than a large tube of toothpaste, or it might not be.

## **Cooking and Baking**

Baking is a great opportunity to learn about fractions. It's hard to think of a more tactile or sensory way to play with fractions - other than cutting up a pizza (and there's a good chance they're not listening to you at that moment!). One great exercise is to ask them to help you double a recipe. They could then get the opportunity to see just how  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup \* 2 turns into  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup. You can pour the ingredients from the  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup into the  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup to reinforce the idea.

We hope these ideas give you some learning opportunities to celebrate and enjoy with your kids over the Holidays. We wish everyone the very best for the Holidays and a Happy New Year!