These active ideas will keep your child’s reading and writing skills strong all summer long—and into the new school year.

**Take an alphabet walk**

Challenge your youngster to find something in your neighborhood or town that starts with each letter of the alphabet. Let him carry a small notebook and a pencil on a walk and write down everything he spots from A to Z. He might see a bike rack, a delivery truck, and a quarry, for example.

**Hop and spell**

Practice spelling with this giant word search. Have your child use chalk to draw a 5 x 5 grid on the driveway or a playground blacktop. Write a random letter in each square, making sure to include plenty of vowels. Take turns finding a hidden word and hopping on each letter to “spell” it. (Letters must touch, but words can snake in all directions.) Help your youngster write everyone’s words beside the grid.

**Find the title**

Ask everyone to secretly think of five familiar book titles and write each word of each title on a separate sticky note. Mix up all the notes, and hide them around the yard. Players race to collect notes and put the titles together. The person with the most correct titles wins. Now celebrate by reading the books!

**Picture this**

Good readers picture images in their minds that help them understand and remember a story. When you read with your youngster, ask her what she “sees.” Here are some ways to start.

- **Begin with a word.** For example, what comes to mind when she reads the word love? Perhaps she thinks of a heart or a hug.

- **Move on to sentences.** If your child tells you she pictures her dog after reading “I love my dog,” help her fill in the details. (“I see myself petting our dog. What do you see yourself doing with Biscuit?”)

- **Use whole pages.** Once she can see clear pictures from sentences, try paragraphs or pages. Choose a page without an illustration, and ask your child to illustrate it.
A plan for my story

This summer, encourage your youngster to write stories about her adventures. These two story-planning strategies will help her organize her thoughts and get started.

1. Make a chart. Have your child draw a three-column chart labeled “Beginning,” “Middle,” and “End.” At the top, she can write the topic she wants to write about (camping, visiting a park, going to the beach). In the first column, she could write or draw a picture of the beginning of her story (setting up a campsite). She can add

Vocabulary around town

New words are everywhere. When you’re on the road, try these ideas to expand your child’s vocabulary.

Make connections

Your youngster can learn new words by associating them with familiar activities or places. Say you’re going fishing. Take turns saying words you might see or use there (pond, trout, cast).

Explain meanings of unfamiliar words.

(“I’m going to cast, or throw, my fishing line over the water.”)

Q&A: Extra help with reading

Q: My child is not yet reading on grade level. He will attend summer school reading classes, but what can I do to help him at home?

A: Instilling a love of reading at home is one of the best things parents can do for any young reader. That’s especially true for struggling readers, who may lack confidence and lose motivation.

Let your child choose library books that interest him, even if they’re below or above his level. Set aside time each day to listen to him read and to read aloud to him. Reading easier books will boost his confidence, and hearing you read harder ones will expose him to more complex plots and language.

Also, introduce yourself to your son’s summer school teacher. Let her know you’d love ideas for supporting your child at home. She’ll be happy to have you as a partner.

Tip:

Listen and write

Have your child keep crayons and paper in the car. Play music, kid-friendly podcasts, or children’s audio books, and encourage him to listen for unfamiliar words. He can pause the audio to write them down. At home, look up the words’ definitions together in a dictionary.

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