

**BY CARRIE SCHEINER**

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Working parents are lining up child-care plans for the summer. While they're at it, educators say all parents of school-age children should also plan for preventing the dreaded "summer slide."

The summer slide is the information and skills children forget during summer break from the end of one school year to the beginning of the next school year.

The education slide is well-documented by numerous studies, which were synthesized in the 1990s by Harris Cooper, then a professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He found that children could forget one to three months of learning over the summer.

While some people are aware of the learning loss, many aren't aware that children tend to gain weight more rapidly when they're out of school.

A 2007 study by Paul Von Hippel of Ohio State University found that kids, especially those at risk for obesity, gain as much weight during the summer as they do all school year.

What can parents do to keep young brains and bodies engaged in healthy ways over the summer? Here are some tips:

- **Journal current achievement levels.** How do you know if your child is affected by summer slide if you don't remember where they ended the year?

Create a summer journal and, in the first few pages, document what they most recently learned in their major subjects. Were they adding and subtracting double-digit numbers? Doing long division? What were some of their vocabulary or spelling words?

Throughout the summer, you can track their progress and, at the least, maintain those levels — or maybe even move on to more challenging material.

- **Try a weeklong educational day camp.** We all want our kids to have fun during the summer, and they can. Enroll in the fun, active day camps that focus on art, music or swimming. But, toward the end of the summer, have your children attend one week of math camp and one week of reading camp as a refresher.

- **Feed the brain during free time.** Kids have a lot more free time in the summer. With fewer scheduled activities, even kids who attend a camp may have more time to hang out in the evening.

How can you feed their brain during this extra time? Visit the library and check out print books, audio books, educational DVDs, and even educational computer games.

Many websites offer activity ideas that you and the kids can enjoy together.

• **Activate the brain.** Getting active exercises both the body and the brain. Just like our body needs exercise to stay healthy, so does the brain to keep those neurons firing. Encourage kids to stay active and play outside during the summer and allow only limited, scheduled times for sedentary activities like video games or TV.

*Carrie Scheiner earned a Master's in statistics from Rutgers University. She was inspired by her own children to develop a program that creatively teaches math facts. Visit [www.exploracise.com](http://www.exploracise.com).*