

Use Summer Fun to Build Background Knowledge

You don't need to have a book in hand to help your child become a better reader. Interesting experiences give kids a broader framework for new information they might encounter in books. When kids have lots of experiences to draw on, they have a better chance of making a connection with what they read!

How can you help build background knowledge this summer?

Step 1: Take summer field trips

Go to the park, the zoo, the aquarium, a sports event, a historical landmark, or a children's museum. Go on a hike or to a natural attraction in your area. When you're indoors, watch a TV program about volcanoes or the rainforest or marsupials, or use the web to take a virtual field trip to a faraway place.

Step 2: Talk about it

Talk about the plants and animals you see, or the rules of a game, or the history of your town, or the new things you learned. Ask questions that get your child to talk, like "If you could be one of those animals we saw today, which one would you be?" or "Why do you think those boulders were shaped like that?"

Step 3: Follow up with a book

Find out what interests your child, and visit the library to get more information. Check out books about butterflies or basketball players or whatever caught your child's attention. Encourage their learning with comments like, "That was cool to see the inside of a computer at the museum today. Let's learn more about that."

You could even have your children create their own book, with photos or illustrations of your activity and their own commentary. This is great writing practice and makes a wonderful summer memory book.

Building background knowledge isn't just fun, it's also a great way to spend your summer!

**For more ideas to help kids learn over the summer, visit:
www.ReadingRockets.org/calendar/summer**

