



The Family Connection

News to Use for families of young adolescents

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Reading, Writing, and 'Rithmetic in the Summer?

As summer approaches our children's thoughts turn to everything but school. While summertime is actually a terrific time for our 10- to 15-year-olds to solidify their learning from this school year and practice skills for the next year, let's be clear about this. We aren't talking about worksheets, tests, or book reports; we are talking about real-life learning that is fun, stimulating, and useful.



With any luck, your young adolescent already chooses to read for fun. That should continue during the summer. All you have to do is make sure that a variety of reading materials are

available—from libraries, book sales, and friends. If your children are not already readers by choice, summer can be an excellent time to turn them into lifelong readers. The same ideas apply, but you may want to start with magazines, comics, or non-fiction materials on topics they are passionate about.

Above all, make time for reading—keep screen time (TV, computer, video games, text messaging) to a minimum. Set a good example for your kids by reading for pleasure in front of them and occasionally talking about your reading—and theirs. Or, choose a movie that you would both like to see and read the book together first. After watching the movie, have a discussion about the similarities and differences.

The writing piece will be a bit more difficult, but encourage your youngster to write to friends, compose stories, or begin a daily journal. While most of us do a fair amount of writing via e-mail, there is something special about actually writing someone a note or postcard, so keep a supply of writing materials and stamps readily accessible.

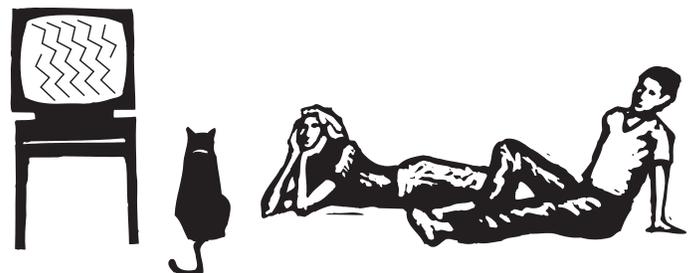
Finally, there are numerous summer opportunities to brush up on math skills. Take your young adolescent shopping with you and have him compute the best buys and track the savings. Or, have him compute baseball averages, track and field distances—any athletic event where numbers are involved.

The idea is to keep your young adolescents using the reading, writing, and math skills they learned during the year.

Middle Schoolers Meet the Media

A recent report, "Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-Olds," by the Kaiser Family Foundation, examined the use of various types of media by students in grades 3-12. Key findings from the report are:

Young people today live media-saturated lives, spending an average of nearly 6 1/2 hours a day with media. TV and music are the dominant media with young people spending an average of three hours a day watching TV (nearly four hours when videos, DVDs, and prerecorded shows are included), and about 1 1/4 hours listening to the radio or to CDs, tapes, or MP3 players.



The majority of young people say their parents don't impose any rules on them regarding their use of TV, video games, music, or computers. Only 36% of seventh to twelfth graders reported that their parents make them finish homework or chores before watching TV. Beyond that, parents appear most likely to regulate their children's computer use—23% of parents have rules about what their kids can do on the computer.

The study is available at www.kff.org.

Parents Ask

Q: *Summer again! Last year was a disaster trying to keep track of my 13-year-old son and my 12-year-old daughter. How much freedom? What do they do when I'm not home every minute of every day? What can I do this summer so that every day isn't another series of battles?*

A: It is time to start planning for summer right now. Sit down with your son and daughter to find out what kinds of activities they would like to be involved in. Will they play sports as part of a team? Will they have part-time jobs that will help them learn responsibility? They should realize that, even though it is summertime, they have daily responsibilities around the house or yard to attend to. They may want to sleep late, and that is fine, but they should keep reasonable hours—say 9 a.m. until 11 a.m.—so they are part of the family. You'll need to have agreed upon rules for the time you are not there—no friends in the house, call you before they go anywhere—and they need to know that you will check on them and hold them to those rules. Honest and open communication is the key—it lets them know you care. Finally, plan to spend time with them at night and on weekends doing activities of mutual interest.

TIPS for Parents

Ten Things Parents Can Do to Empower Young Adolescents

1. Knock three times on that bedroom door before entering.
2. Treat your middler's friends (even the ones you don't cotton to) with respect.
3. Honor the modesty mandate of a young developing body. No sneak peeks.
4. Allow access to the Internet, but do spot check.
5. Provide a budget to redecorate the bedroom from childish to more appropriate.
6. Role model privacy by not going through your spouse's mail, e-mail, or pockets.
7. Don't open report cards arriving by mail; let your young adolescent review grades first.
8. Keep any confessions your child makes about others confidential (unless life threatening).
9. Teach about privacy by drawing privacy boundaries; affirm "that's too personal to share with me."
10. Do not snoop.



From *What Are You Doing In There? Balancing Your Need to Know with Your Adolescent's Need to Grow* by Charlene C. Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese. Available through the NMSA Online Bookstore at www.nmsa.org or by calling 1-800-528-NMSA.



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➤ **About the Editors:** Edward Brazee is editor of professional publications for National Middle School Association and professor of middle level education at the University of Maine. Constance Carter is director of Operation Breaking Stereotypes, a nonprofit organization that facilitates exchanges between rural and inner-city middle schools and high schools.