

BRAIN DRAIN

There are plenty of ways to help children to enjoy their summer holidays, whilst keeping their education ticking over

Words SOPHIE STEAD



As the summer holidays fast approach families are collectively holding their breath, waiting for that moment when the final bell goes and students are free to relax for two long months before the start of a new school year. However, whilst relaxation and recuperation are essential to ensure children have the chance to recharge, spend time outside and build up their energy levels ahead of a brand new year in September, ‘switching off’ for long periods of time is not actually that helpful, especially in academic terms.

The brain acts like a muscle – you need to use it or it will weaken! Repetition is a key learning technique, so educational activities should be viewed in the same way as tennis or swimming. No matter how hard you work on your swing, if you don’t do anything for six weeks it will take time to get back up to your best level. If you stop practising a

sport you lose muscle strength and endurance and it’s the same for the brain. The learning process is the same, especially if your child struggles with certain concepts or learning techniques.

The concept of Summer Learning Loss has been discussed for decades, but in a world where students are tested regularly and learning is fast-paced, this loss of learning is becoming more of an acute problem for school-aged children. A landmark research piece in the late 1990s revealed that not using academic skills over the summer actually set most students’ learning back by at least a month and, at worse, three months. The loss of learning was most pronounced in maths and reading, essential skills for those facing the challenging 11+ or 13+ exams.

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However, this doesn’t mean that your child needs to be tied to their desk for the whole of the summer holidays or have lots of tutoring. Varied education activities will keep the brain ticking over and ensures the hard work spent during the school year building new skills is not lost. These activities don’t have to be boring either. The key is little and often and contextual learning ensures children can engage with the world around them whilst learning. New experiences are a vital part of your child’s learning process and the summer holidays give the perfect opportunity to expand his/her horizons and can have a deep impact on their learning and development when back at school. Taking your child to the theatre or a museum can bring a subject to life.

We created our popular online ‘Summer Fizz’ course, to respond to parents requests for ways to ignite

children’s natural curiosity in the world around them and ensure that learning and skills development continues to take place. We’ve found that this project-based online approach

encourages children to think beyond the curriculum and think about the relevance of their learning to everyday life.

Sophie Stead is a part of the Enjoy Education team. Find out more at enjoyeducation.co.uk or by calling 020 7352 8800