

Ideas for Learning in Subject Areas

Language Arts

- **Read:** Let them choose the books. Doesn't matter if they are your own books, books you download from our Library eCollections, or read/watch from Tumblebooks (westfordlibrary.org/kids/tumblebooks/)
- **Do an activity related to the book:** NOT a book report! Here's a great list of ideas: <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/103-things-do-during-or-after-reading>
- **Read aloud to them:** I read aloud to my kids until my oldest was 15. Certainly they could have read on their own, but reading together was part of our ritual. In fact, of all the things we did together, reading aloud to them and having conversations about the books were some of the most meaningful times we had. The books I chose were usually above their own reading level and of genres they might not choose for themselves such as classics, historical fiction, science fiction, etc.
- **For kids learning to read:** Choose a book that's a little too hard for them but with a good story. Assign them a word or two that they are responsible for reading. You read the rest. Watching for their word will encourage them to track for their word but also to see the words you are reading. Before long, many more words will be in their reading vocabulary. For kids a little farther along, let them read the dialog and you read the descriptive text. Dialog is usually easier. Don't make sounding out the word painful. If they don't get it right away, help them. This should be fun, not work.
- **Make a family newspaper.**
- **Use Scrabble as a resource:** Put all the vowels face up in the lid of the box for use by anyone. Pull 5 consonants from the bag. Let them make words and put them anywhere they want. Of course, they will want the double or triple word score locations! So what? You will be practicing spelling and arithmetic at the same time. For kids just learning to spell, maybe just start with one vowel. If you don't have Scrabble, make your own letter tiles with cereal box cardboard.
- **Spelling alternatives:** Buy a giant bag of salt and dump it into a pan. Spell words with your finger. Trace a word or letter on your child's back and see if they can guess it.
- **Write a letter** to a someone you can't see for awhile because of social distancing. Don't forget the envelope! Address, return address, and stamp can all be fun learning experiences for young children.
- **Write a story/journal entry/book review using *exactly* 100 words.** This is harder than it sounds and is a fun challenge for anyone in 4th-12th grade!

Math for elementary kids can be very playful.

- Use Lego for counting and sorting. Also helpful for exploring with multiplication and division. Any kid who plays with Lego inherently understands that it takes 3 two-bump Lego to cover a six-bump Lego. Presto...multiplication!
- Use board games and dice or a game spinner to help learn arithmetic tables. Any board game they love will do. It's best if you have a 10-sided die. If not, make a spinner out of a paper plate, brad fastener, and a cardboard arrow. Example: To learn the 4X multiplication tables, 4 will be your "number of the day." On your turn, roll the die or game spinner. Then multiply that number by 4. Voila! That's how many spaces you go! The kids love zooming around the board. Or, if you feel the numbers are too big, then reduce the number. For example, if you roll an 8, multiply by 4 to make 32. Then add 3 and 2 together to get 5. Move 5 spaces.
- Cook together. Fractions become easy. Halve or double a recipe and have your kids figure out the ratios (don't make it about math, make it about food). Have older kids take charge and flex their planning muscles by letting them make whatever they want for dinner – as long as they make enough for everyone in the house!
- Go "virtual" shopping to learn percentages. I had them cut pictures out of catalogs or the paper that they wanted to "buy." These days, you could find images on the computer and print them out. Make a deck of percentages. Start with easy ones like 50%, 25%, and 10%. Give them a fixed amount of Monopoly money and set up a store. See how much they can "buy" with what they have in their "pocket." Let them choose an item, take the top card off of the percentages pile, and calculate how much the item would be. They decide if it's too much or not.
- Make them their own checks (fake, of course) and teach them how to write a check. Could be a lost art by the time they grow up, but maybe not.

Make History Come Alive: Read about Vikings and make a shield. Use the Internet to visit the Pyramids of Egypt and mummify an apple or make a shoebox sarcophagus. Read about the American Revolution and reenact some of the battles. My kids and I made a huge, albeit crude, floor map of the 13 colonies (geography), dressed up our Beanie Babies as Redcoats or Colonists (arts & crafts), and placed them on the map where the big battles took place (history). Tons of fun!

- Here is a link to a local historian who does free Live Stream videos every Wednesday and loves to answer kids' questions: <http://www.judithkalaora.com/index.html>

Play with Science: Explore what lives or is growing in your back yard. Plant some seeds. Find out what makes rain happen. Do an experiment to determine which materials make the best insulator. Play with density of liquids. Buy a gallon of vinegar and a huge bag of baking soda and let them play. Make slime. There are tons of fun things to explore with materials you have at home. With an entire classroom, a teacher has to be organized to pull the pieces together. At home, you can each gather some of the materials and you do it together.

Build Critical Thinking Skills: Board games, card games, and puzzles don't have to be "educational" to develop the skills students need to be successful.