

# How to Retain Improve School Skills Over the Summer

By Chris Purgatori, MOT, OTRL  
KCC Occupational Therapist

Summer is here! While many kids thrive on relaxed days and fun activities, others struggle without the structure and routine they're used to during the school year. Meanwhile, parents worry that time off from school will cause their children to fall behind.

Sensory activities can help! Kids of all abilities benefit from sensory play, which increases brain functioning, improves emotional regulation, and supports their ability to process new information.

Start your adventures by sharing the "plan for the day" with your kids using a picture, verbal, or written schedule. This gives them the routine they crave and assists with easier transitions, including going back to school in the fall.

## Fun summer sensory ideas:

- ☀️ Beach trip. Walking or playing in the sand provides great tactile input that can be used for calming and organizing a child's body. Forming letters in the sand also adds tactile input to handwriting practice.
- ☀️ Outdoor scavenger hunt. The outdoors is filled with unique, tangible objects to aid in the learning process. Challenge your children with multistep directions (find something that is crunchy and something that is green). Teach same versus different skills and solve math problems (two sticks plus three worms equal five total items).



- ☀️ Outdoor obstacle courses. Sequences provide movement and heavy work that calm and organize while improving body and spatial awareness. An example: roll down a hill, go down a slide, complete a hopscotch grid then bike ride for a certain distance.
- ☀️ Swimming. Swimming provides movement and heavy work which aids in regulation, engagement, and body awareness. It can also improve bilateral coordination that aids handwriting, cutting, and coloring skills.
- ☀️ Play at the park. Climbing, swinging, and balancing required by many playground activities improve fine motor control and increased body awareness.
- ☀️ Nature hunt. Create cards with pictures of 10-15 items such as trees, flowers, bees, clouds, and bikes. When a child finds an item while out and about, ask them to write the word before marking it off on their board. This helps with handwriting and the visual scanning needed for reading.
- ☀️ Chalk or sidewalk paint. Use these media to work on writing shapes and letters or to solve math problems. Chalk adds an additional tactile input to improve overall memory; using a squirt bottle filled with water to erase the chalk improves hand strengthening.
- ☀️ Sports. Activities that address hand-foot-eye coordination, bilateral coordination and crossing the body's midline help with reading, writing and body awareness.



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Summer provides endless opportunities to continue the learning process right in your own backyard! We hope you have a great time together.