

HOME: THE SUMMER LEARNING PLACE

By Dr. Dorothy Rich

Here is a room-by-room tour through a house, anybody's house, aimed at demonstrating the marvelous opportunities for learning that are hidden in every nook and cranny. The MegaSkills Center specializes in helping all teachers and families know how on capitalize on everyday experiences to build academic success.

Living Room

How tall is the lamp? How wide is the room? How long the sofa? The living room is a treasure trove for little mathematicians to measure - with ruler, tape, string, any old thing.

See the newspapers and magazines left on Dad's favorite chair? Hurry, get the scissors. Here is a great opportunity for exercising reading, writing and math skills. For example: Challenge your children to search ads for certain letters and combinations of letters; they cut them out and paste them on paper for all the world to admire.

Or have your children cut out pictures of furniture, which they place in "rooms" on a big floor plan you provide.

Or, mount magazine pictures on shirtboards. Then cut them into jigsaw puzzles to entertain your children and start their observation and thinking machinery.

Or, play a game in which you tell your children to pretend they have \$25 to spend; then hunt through ads to make up a shopping list that won't break the bank.

And how about the TV? It's a jewel of a tool for getting pre-schoolers into clockwork to make them responsible for keeping tabs on tune-in time for their favorite show. For children of any age, use TV as a window on the world; open it up to let in learning about far-away places, the arts, current events, etc. Remember to be selective about programs and limit children's TV watching.

Bedroom

There are words that attach to clothing (shirt, sock, etc.) and words that attach to body parts (foot, arm, etc.). The bedroom is a fine place to learn both. Say the words aloud as clothes go on and off. Tape a large outline drawing of your children's silhouettes on the wall or floor. Then label the parts while they watch and help.

Delighted is the child who authors books and places them as favorites on a nearby shelf. Supply four sheets of white paper, folded and stapled together, book style. Let your youngster go to it. (Pre-schoolers draw their stories and dictate captions. Older kids do both the pictures and the words.)

From time to time, give the bedtime story ritual a new twist. Stop just short of the ending and let your children guess how it will all turn out. It's a good way to build listening skills and expand the imagination.

When is a bedroom a math room? When your child matches and counts socks or counts and folds sheets or separates underwear from the shirts. And remember the rhymes: sock and clock, bed and head. Rhymes like these are all around the bedroom. Rhyming games are nice for going to sleep, and they build reading readiness.

Bath

Labels on medicine, cleanser and pill containers are life-and-death words that your child must be taught to read carefully. There's no better time than bath time for a little scientific investigation into the question of which objects (soap, cord, etc.) float and which sink.

Have your child look for shapes, e.g. (oval soap, round bottle).

Let your child record his/her weight on a calendar.

Run hot water, build steam.

Discuss what happens and why.

Turn on the cold water, open the door.

What happens?

Keep the conversation going. It's the surest route to high test scores, too.

Dining Room

Helping to set the table is a wonderful way for a young child to learn the concept of one-to-one correspondence (e.g. one fork for each member of the family). This is an understanding that's mighty useful when it comes to beginning reading and math.

Because they're so foldable, paper napkins are nifty for "fractioning." Help your children get a feeling for fractions by having them fold a napkin first into halves, and then, into quarters. Soon, they'll work their way up to eighths - maybe even, sixteenths.

Kitchen

From time to time, let your children help with the food shopping list. It takes time, but it's worth it. As they check shelves to see what's needed, they learn to recognize words like bread and cheese and a little about food measures, weights, and costs.

Children can select a simple recipe (for example Jell-O), read the directions and do the "cooking." If they are pre-readers, you read the directions and the children do as much of the work as they can.

Write a number in each cup of an egg carton. Into each, the child places a corresponding number of buttons. This is math and eye-hand practice.

Remember: Success in School Starts in Every Home.

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