

## Reading at a Summer's Pace

A garden hose, a library card, and an adult with time to enjoy them both—these are the ingredients for a child's perfect summer.

As days grow longer and the world's pace slows a bit, even the youngest children seem to know that summer has arrived. School's out, and life changes to some degree for most of us. For children, lingering in play is a delicious freedom. Relaxed schedules mean more time to create and imagine.

Many of summer's simple pleasures are related to cooling water. A garden hose spraying a stream or filling a plastic pool provides fun peculiar to this season of sunshine. Attached to a lawn sprinkler, it becomes a fountain of bliss. In fact, running through a sprinkler with bare legs on a hot day must be one of the finest human experiences. One must wonder why it's reserved for children.

But following the heat of the afternoon, reading a good book provides a cool respite. Sheltered beneath a shade tree, children can luxuriate in books just as they do in water.

Many parents are as intentional in planning for their child's summer reading experiences as they are in planning the family vacation. They make an event of going to the library and signing up for the summer reading program. They bring a bag to tote home the judiciously selected titles. They plan a place in their home for keeping track of the books, as well as the list where they will carefully record the titles they have enjoyed together.

And then they read—lying on the floor, sitting on the steps, curled up on their beds, coveting the air conditioner vent. None of this sitting bolt upright in chairs at desks. That kind of reading is for school. Summer reading is a whole lot more pleasant.

They read cuddled on mom's or dad's lap, careful not to kick over the sweaty glass of lemonade perched on the coffee table nearby. The school-agers read aloud together, and the little ones babble in response to the words and pictures.

And because it's summer, there's often time to stretch the stories with real experiences. They can read McCloskey's *Blueberries for Sal* and pick and eat blueberries. They can read Ehler's *Growing Vegetable Soup* and then plant a garden. They can read Zelinsky's *The Wheels on the Bus* and go for a ride on public transportation.

What wealth for kids to spend the summer letting their minds go wherever stories might take them! Their teachers will notice it in the fall, too. They won't need the reteaching that must consume the early weeks of school for children who lose ground over the summer months.

As the temperature rises, slow down the pace. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids—and drink in plenty of books!

