

EARLY LEARNING PARENTS' PAGES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING



Summer Learning

Usually parents are searching for ways to support their children's learning during the summer. Research shows that there is a [summer slide](#) in learning that occurs when children are not in schools or child care programs. Since many children have not been participating in their child care programs or schools for several months due

to the COVID-19 pandemic, the "Summer Slide" may be happening already.

If your child has been at home with you as their teacher and parent, you may be looking for some different resources and activities. The Office of Early Learning has a Summer Learning Page on their website that may be just what you need. The "[Wonder-filled Summer Learning](#)" has resources that are easy to use and encourages your child's natural curiosity.

Summer offers you the time to encourage your child to wonder about the world around them. The more curious a child is about the things in their world, the more they will learn. [Nurturing your child's curiosity](#) is one of the most important ways you can help your child become a lifelong learner. Wondering about something leads to open-ended questions that can be explored in many exciting ways. [Using your child's natural curiosity](#) to expand their learning opportunities will lead to many exciting activities for you and your child to enjoy. Use the resources and activities to create a "wonder-filled" summer full of learning and fun for your child. To spark your child's "I wonder" questions, visit Wonderopolis and explore the questions you find there. [Wonderopolis](#) offers a free, online summer camp, [Camp Wonderopolis](#) that's full of fun interactive STEM and literacy topics boosted by Maker experiments you can do with your child.

There are three ways to find a Summer Break Spot:

Search the [map](#) to locate free balanced meals this summer while schools are closed! Summer Break Spot locations are a place for kids and teens to grab a free meal. Grab and go meals and social distancing measures are in effect at Summer Break Spot sites.

Select a preferred distance from "Sites Within" and begin typing an address or zip code into the search bar. Select the correct address or zip code that populates under the search bar. If there are no sites listed in the search results for your area, please check back later, as sites are being added to the map twice daily at 4:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Dial 2-1-1 or text FOODFL to 877-877

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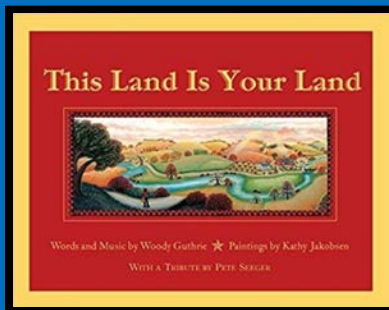
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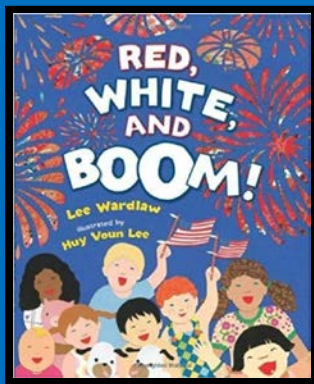
4th of July Book Ideas for Preschoolers



“F is for Flag”



“This Land Is Your Land”



“Red, White, and Boom”

To find more July 4th books suggestions visit:

<https://bit.ly/4thJulyBooks>

Time for Immunizations

Is your child starting a new child care program or transitioning to Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) or kindergarten? If so, you will need to make sure that all of their immunizations are current. Check with your child’s pediatrician or check your copy of their health records if you are unsure.

[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#) has a page for parents to help you learn ways to protect your child from 16 potentially harmful diseases. There are resources to help you [track your child’s immunizations](#), learn ways to [calm or support your child before and during the doctor’s visit](#) and even has recommendations on the [best way to hold your infant, toddler or young child](#) while they are getting a shot.



You can download a 60 page booklet, [Parent’s Guide to Childhood Immunizations](#) that has an overview of the different vaccines needed during childhood and many tips and resources for parents who would like to learn more about immunizations for children. You can also access a list of [recommended vaccinations](#) from birth to age eighteen. This list can assist in discussions with your child’s doctor or nurse about the vaccines recommended for your child’s age.

Florida SHOTS (State Health Online Tracking System) is a free, statewide, centralized online immunization registry that helps parents, health care providers and schools keep track of immunization records. Ask your health care provider for a personal identification number so you can view your child’s immunization history and print a copy of your child’s Florida Certification of Immunization (DH Form 680). You can access the immunization requirements for your child [here](#). For more information visit the Florida SHOTS website at: <http://www.flshotsusers.com/>. You can also call the Florida SHOTS Help Desk at 1-877-888-7468. To help you understand the importance of childhood immunizations, the CDC has a video for parents, [Get the Picture: Childhood Immunizations](#), to answer many of the questions parents typically have about immunizations.

Tax Free Holiday Coming Soon!

Getting ready to send children back to school can be expensive! Luckily, families in Florida are able to benefit from a sales tax-free holiday for school supplies and clothing. This [back-to-school sales tax holiday](#) will help cut the cost of getting children ready to return to their schools. From August 7th to August 9th, parents can find this discount applied to the following items:

- School Supplies (i.e. notepads, pens/pencils, markers, crayons, etc.)
- Backpacks, Diaper Bags and Fanny packs
- Clothes, Shoes and Uniforms
- Jackets and Coats
- Electronics (i.e. computers, laptops, calculators, printers)



During this tax-free holiday, most supplies have a limit of value per item in order to qualify to be tax exempt, that you should be aware of:

1. School supplies must be under \$15 or less
2. Clothing, footwear and other items under \$60 or less
3. Electronic items for \$1000 or less

Large retailers take part in the tax free holiday and will have online sales during this time of year too. Check local and online stores for special sales or coupons that may be applied. Most child care facilities and schools will have a list of supplies needed for the upcoming school year. If your school does not have a supply list, buy items such as pencils, crayons, and clothing to prepare your child for their return.

Supportive Friendships for You and Your Child

During this global pandemic where families continue to socially distance themselves, it is increasingly important to care for your child's social-emotional development. You, as a parent, are your child's first friend. From birth, children recognize the care you give them. When you care for your child's needs this teaches your child to feel secure and protected. When your child feels secure and protected they will explore the world around them and begin to form friendships.

[Zero to Three's Magic of Everyday Moments: From Feelings to Friendship](#)

shares tips for developing a strong bond with your child. These tips include showing your child you care, observing your child, establishing routines and helping your child develop self-confidence. Building a strong bond with your child will nurture their healthy social-emotional development. Watch this short [video](#) to learn how to support your child's relationship building skills.



It is so important to continue to surround yourself with your friends during parenthood, whether your friends are parents or not. Zero to Three's article, [A Social Life After Baby? Yes!](#), shares the importance of having social support, friends, and networking. Parenthood can feel isolating, much like the current global pandemic. Having people to talk with, complain to, cry with, laugh with and just talk about your kids with can be just the support you need as a parent. Friendship in parenthood can look different. You may continue to have the same friendships and gain new friendships. Sometimes, as a parent, you may feel you just need something new or different.

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If that is the case, consider exploring new social networks and make virtual connections with groups of people who share the same interests.

Get out of the house and meet new people, try a parenting class or group, take part in adult activities you did before becoming a parent or do something new that you have wanted to try. Continue to nurture the friendships you have and explore online groups for parents to make new friends.

July 30th is the International Day of Friendship. Spend the day with your child and your friends. If you are not able to visit friends consider these ways to [celebrate friendship](#).



- Take or send your friends a thoughtful gift.
- Call, text, email or send a card to let your friends know how important they are to you.
- Attend or host a virtual or small community event that brings people together.
- Read a book about friendship or start a book club with your friends.

Talking with Your Child about Difficult Subjects

One of the most difficult jobs you have as a parent is talking to your child about subjects that make you feel uncomfortable or may make your child feel uncomfortable. Often parents feel uncomfortable because they do not know the “correct answer” or have enough information on the topic to explain on the child’s level of understanding. It is even more challenging to discuss issues the world has not been able to resolve, such as violence, racism, prejudice, drugs, and deaths of innocent people and equity for all people. When your child sees and hears news or stories about events in your community or in the country or world about these serious topics, you need to respond to your child’s fears and questions.



When events on television, movies and social media are seen by or shared with your child, be prepared to show them how you gather and examine information, ask questions, consider the sources of information and think critically about the situation and information. To do this, you need to consider your child’s age and developmental level to guide your conversations. Your child may be too young to understand complex issues and emotions, but they are very sensitive to the emotions and words of their family members and close friends and can sense your anger, fear and confusion. [Common Sense Media offers guidance](#) on addressing sensitive issues with young children. They suggest the following recommendations when discussing difficult or sensitive issues with children, ages 2 years – 6 years:

- **Keep the news at bay.** Do what you can to limit small kids' exposure to age-inappropriate subjects by turning off or muting the TV and choosing media that's suitable to their age.
- **Reassure with both words and gestures.** Say, "You're safe. Mommy and Daddy are safe. And our family is safe." Hugs and snuggling work wonders, too.

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- **Address feelings -- yours and theirs.** Say, "It's OK to feel scared, sad, or confused. Those feelings are natural and we all feel them." Also: "I'm upset, but not with you."
- **Find out what they know.** Your kids might not understand the issue very well. Ask them what they think happened before giving them any imagery.
- **Break down issues to their simplest terms.** For violent crimes, say, "Someone used a gun to shoot people." For hate crimes, say, "Some groups of people still aren't treated equally or fairly."
- **Catch your own biases.** We all have them. Say, "man," "woman," "girl," and "boy," not "fat guy," "homeless lady," "pretty little girl," or "black boy." Avoid describing a person's ethnicity, sexual identity, weight, financial status and unless it's relevant to the issue.
- **Use familiar vocabulary, ideas, and relationships.** Recall a similar situation from their lives that they can relate to. Say, "A store was robbed. Remember when the bakery was closed because someone took their money?"
- **Use basic terms for feelings such as "mad," "sad," "afraid," "happy" and "surprised."** Young children understand emotions, but they don't totally understand mental illness. You can say that someone was angry too much or confused too much and needed extra help. Avoid idiomatic expressions such as "blew a gasket" or "flew the coop."
- **Communicate that someone's in charge.** Say, "Mommy and Daddy will make sure nothing bad happens to our family."

When your child approaches you with questions related to these difficult topics or pictures they see in the news, it is best to be as honest as possible about your feelings and concerns. Find ways to make them feel better about the situation by asking them to draw a picture or tell you a story about the way they feel or what they would do if something similar happened to them or someone in their family.

Additional Resources for Talking with Your Child About Difficult Subjects:



Talking About Race:

<https://bit.ly/TalkAboutRaceArticle>

How Do I Help My Kid Understand Race?:

<https://bit.ly/HelpUnderstanding>

How White Parents Can Talk To Their Kids About Race:

<https://bit.ly/NPRTalkAboutRace>

Sharing Picture Books that Nurture Positive Self-Identity:

<https://bit.ly/PositivityBooks>

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr./John Legend Video:

<https://bit.ly/YouTubeDRMLK>

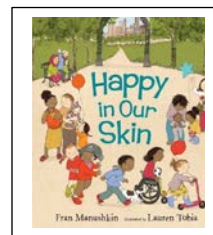
Gearing Up for VPK

Beginning VPK is an exciting and important step in your child's educational journey. Research suggests that children who attend a high-quality preschool program are better prepared for Kindergarten. VPK is designed to provide a strong foundation for future social and academic success. As your child prepares for VPK, there are a number of ways that you can support your child's smooth and confident transition.

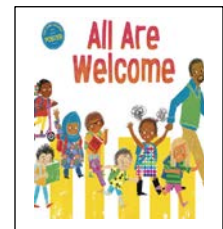
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Book Ideas for Talking About Race:

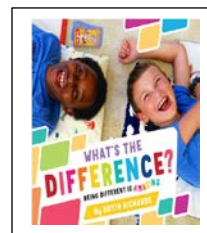
The following books are highlighted from Huffington Post: *25 Children's Books That Celebrate Differences*



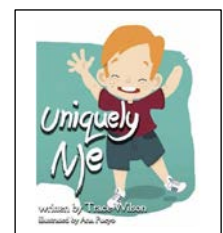
"Happy in Our Skin"



"All Are Welcome"



"What's The Difference? Being Different is Amazing"



"Uniquely Me"



Visit the school- Many programs schedule a time for you and your child to meet the teacher and become acquainted with the classroom. Take advantage of this event or schedule a time to visit the classroom together. You may want to take pictures of the classroom, playground and teacher so that you can refer to them as the big day arrives.

Empower them with knowledge- If possible, ask for a copy of the daily schedule so that you can discuss the order of events with your child so they will know what to expect. Be sure to specify when and where you will arrive for pick-up (i.e., “When you get to school you will have a meeting with the class, then a delicious snack. Next, you will go outside to play, come inside and choose a center to work in. Then there will be another class meeting. After the second meeting time, I will come back to the classroom to pick you up.”).

Create a countdown calendar- Purchase or make a calendar or use the [Ready Freddy Calendar](#) and help your child count down the days before VPK begins. Start a week in advance (i.e., “There are 4 more sleeps before VPK starts!”). Once school is in session, use the calendar to clearly mark school days, weekends, and special events.

Practice the new routine- A few weeks before VPK begins, establish a “school bedtime” and “wake-up time”. Start practicing the new morning routine a week before school starts (i.e., wake up, get dressed, eat breakfast, say goodbye to the dog, get your backpack, etc.).

Pack a piece of home- If the school allows it, invite your child to pack a comfort item (i.e., a favorite stuffed animal, blanket or family picture) to keep in their cubby or backpack so that the new environment doesn’t feel so scary.

Prepare for the big day- Encourage your child to prepare for VPK by choosing their own back pack, shoes or first day outfit. This will help build excitement for school and empower them throughout the preparation process.

Read all about it- There are a number of books that discuss starting preschool and saying goodbye, such as:

Preschool, Here I Come! by David J. Steinberg

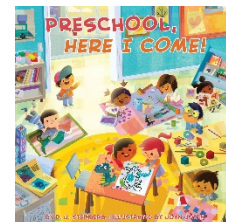
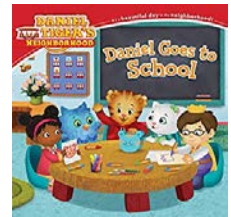
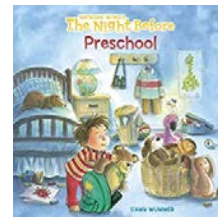
Daniel Goes to School (Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood) by Becky Friedman

I'm Going to Preschool (Big Steps) by Marion Cocklico

Pete the Kitty's First Day of Preschool (Pete the Cat) by James Dean

The Night Before Preschool by Natasha Wing

The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn



These books may be used to familiarize your child with the concept of preschool and build excitement for things to come. They may also present opportunities for you to discuss feelings about upcoming changes. Assure your child that VPK is going to be a fun experience and that they will be safe at their new school.

Ultimately, your child will look to you to help them navigate this new chapter in their journey. A little preparation goes a long way. You may discover more about the skills that your child will be building throughout this exciting year by accessing the *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Four Years Old to Kindergarten* at:

<https://bit.ly/FL4YRStandards>

Patriotic Pudding Pops

School is out and with long summer days ahead, take a break away from the heat and create a chilly, yummy treat with your child! This [frozen dessert](#) only takes 10 minutes to make, but can be a treat to enjoy all summer long.

What you will need:

- 1 pack instant white chocolate pudding (3.9 oz.)
- 2 cups of milk
- 1 cup whipped topping, thawed
- 1 pint of blueberries
- 10 strawberries, sliced by parent
- 6 small Dixie cups
- Popsicle sticks



Directions:

1. In a medium bowl, mix together the pudding and milk for 2 minutes. Stir in whipped topping.
2. Have your child place the strawberries or blueberries along the bottom of each cup.
3. Follow the first layer of berries with a few scoops of the pudding mix.
4. Have your child put another layer, with the other berry, on top of the pudding.
5. Place one more layer of pudding mix to the top of the cup.
6. Push one popsicle stick down into the center of each cup.
7. Place in the freezer for 24 hours to chill.

When you are ready to eat, run the outside of the cup under warm water for 5-10 seconds, then simply pull on the stick to release. Enjoy!

SPECIAL DATES IN JULY:

1-7: Clean Beaches Week

10: National Kitten Day

4: Independence Day

26: National Parents', Aunt and Uncle Day

7: National Strawberry Sundae Day

30: International Day of Friendship



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