

Activity: Fun Ways to Secretly Build Academic Skills



By Joanna Nesbit

It's easy to get caught up in the daily homework that seems so important for mastering academic skills. But when homework is finished, families can do a lot to keep learning fun. In fact, kids won't even realize they're learning with these real-life activities:

- **Bake a cake.** Kids love to bake if we let them help (try to ignore the mess), and measuring ingredients involves fractions, conversions, addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. Even very young kids can learn the basics of these skills. Best of all, you have a treat to eat at the end.
- **Host a lemonade stand.** Not only do kids learn how to be gracious to their customers, they learn how to count, recognize coins quickly and make change. They also get to practice saying "thank you" and "you're welcome."
- **Go grocery shopping.** Enlist your child's help when it's time to grocery shop or do errands by having her write the lists and keep track of them during your outings. While you're at the market, have her compare prices, brands and amounts to get the best deal and save you money.
- **Read aloud to each other.** Even if your child isn't a reluctant reader, it's fun to make reading interactive by taking turns reading aloud. Alternate pages and add silly voices for extra laughs. Reading aloud lengthens attention spans, increases listening skills, builds comprehension and creates special one-on-one time.
- **Start a two-person book club.** Kids feel valued when their parents not only ask what they're reading but actually read the books themselves. It shows you care about his interests. In our house, I'm reading a series my 12-year-old son recommended, and every night we talk plot and I share my predictions. He loves it.

Joanna Nesbit is a Pacific Northwest freelance writer who writes about parenting, family, travel or any combination of these topics. Her articles and essays have appeared in parent, custom and online publications.