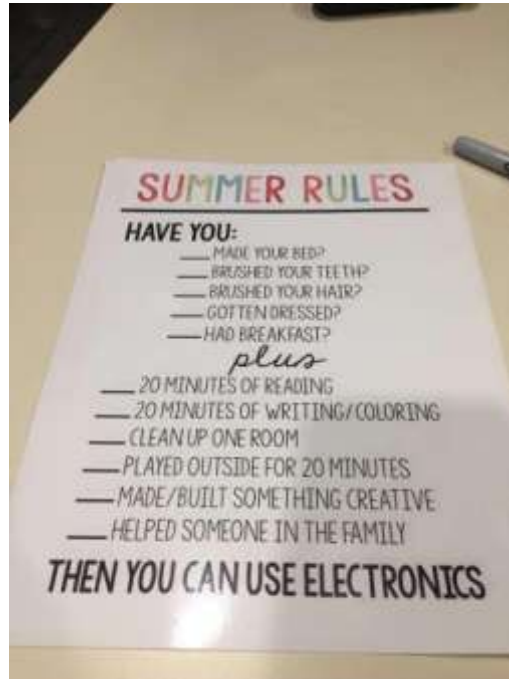


Screen Time Mitigates the Summer Slide

by Judy Arnall



The summer slide is a term used by parents and educators to describe the loss of learning that children experience over the summer when they are away from the books. Come September, it takes a month or two of review to catch up to where they have been in June. This catch-up tells me that the learning has never been true learning, if it so easily gets dumped from children's short term memory.

To combat the summer slide, parents make sure that summer includes some formal learning. They make charts like the one above to be sure children have a balanced day. I have to say that I totally disagree with it. Summer should be all hands-off. It is a time to experience free time and learn how to manage it. First, I am the worst model of this. Email comes first in the morning with my cup of tea. Every person has to find a routine that works for them.

Second, it sounds so dictatorial. Real relationship parenting starts with a conversation of concerns. I wouldn't have a list like this for my husband as it is too disrespectful and neither would I have it for my children.

Third, the list defeats the intent. I can see a kid getting through this list in a half hour and then spending all day on electronics. When the parent's protest, the kids says, "I followed the rules!" All the things on the list should be done without an expectation of reward. Kids naturally like to help. It will come with age and maturity, not bribery.

Fourth, children naturally develop self-control as they age. They naturally decide when and how to get dressed, shower, tidy their room, help out with dishes, and clean a room.

Fifth, as an unschooler who has never put limits on screen time when my kids were older than 6 years (there are lots of research that show children under six are at risk for language development with increased use of electronics), I see no problem with hours and hours on screens. So many "experts" tell parents to get their kids off screens in the summer or their brains "will turn to mush!" Really? This is not based in science. All activities are learning activities. It is the adults sorting the activities into desirable ones and less desirable ones. The kids learn so much from the internet and playing video games. I do encourage the kid's self-discipline to build in some exercise time, in their day. They are already very creative on screens with making memes, mods and stuff. Summer learning loss never happens when kids are allowed access to the internet - in fact, they have the time to learn what they truly want to learn, not what the government dictates what they want to learn.

Here is a good article on why kids should be on screens all summer!

<https://www.ucalgarymag.ca/issue/spring-summer-2017/article/unlocking-skills-power-brain-games>

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