

# Teaching Your Children How to Use the Library

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As a mom of two elementary school-aged kids, I'm always looking for fun things for them to do during the summer at the library. With a three-year age gap between them, though, it's difficult to find something that would satisfy both their interests. With all the free and cost-saving resources the library has to offer (and air conditioning during hot summer days), maybe it's time for you to rediscover this gem!

## Books, Books, and More Books

Get your kids their own library card. You might be surprised how this one simple act will change a young child's attitude and perspective – they will feel proud to have their own card with their own special PIN (just make sure to record it somewhere).

Grant your kids the freedom to explore and discover books that interest them. Kids also feel empowered when they have the ability to choose what they like.

Challenge them to read books about topics they are not familiar with. In our family, our kids can borrow 10 books at a time, or whatever they can carry by themselves in their designated book bag. If they don't like a book they've checked out, no worries! They can always bring it back to the library and check out different ones next time.

Give your kids the skill of being responsible. While I definitely love reading books, the mom in me also loves the added benefit that my kids will also learn to take care of borrowed materials and return the books on time. In order to accomplish this, we have a designated place in our house for library books so they don't get mixed in with our personal books and toys. We also add our library visit to our activity calendar so our kids know when to return their books.

## Beyond Books

Participate in your local library's Summer Reading Challenge. This is a great way for your kids to keep track of their reading and win prizes for their efforts and accomplishments. After they read their books, ask them about what they read – what was their favorite part of the book? Did they learn anything new? Is there anything that they would have done differently from the author? What could they learn about themselves from reading the book?

Practice writing skills with fun activities. Does your local library have any writing contests going on during the summer? Maybe a graphic novel writing contest? How about an anime or science fiction club? Let your kids join those activities and have them

keep up with their writing skills.

Partnerships with museums need to be utilized! Did you know that many libraries have arrangements with world-class museums and cultural institutions that give library card holders free or discounted admission passes? While these passes are available throughout the year, families looking for fun, hands-on learning activities for their kids should take advantage of summer's flexible schedule and go explore! Check your library's website or ask your local librarian for more details.

## Build Community

Create fun memories for your kids and do group activities with friends at the library during the summer. Interact with STEAM workshops, attend movie nights, play chess, have a picnic outside on the lawn, listen during story time, or get involved with other classes the library has to offer.

Connect with your friends or other adults in the neighborhood by joining a book club, attending an ESL conversation group, or bringing your flower or plant questions to a gardening class. Yes, there are designated classes for adults. Who says the kids are the only ones to have all the fun?

So with all these fun activities and resources available at the library, the only question now is, what will you and the kids dive into first?

Happy reading!

Jaime

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