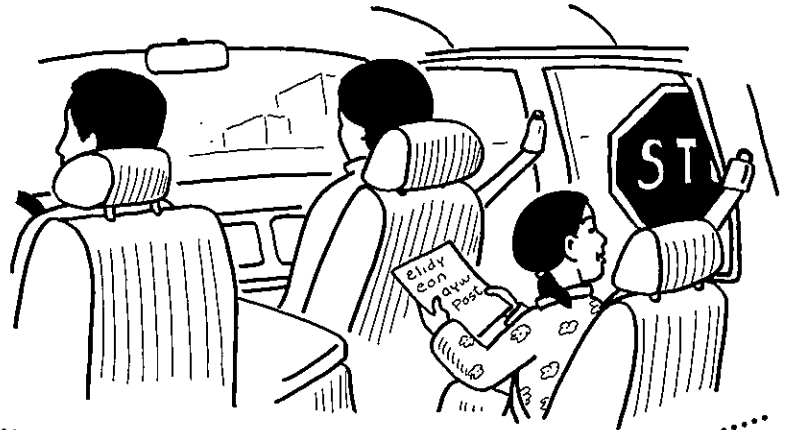


# Let's Break for Learning

Learning can happen every day, whether your child is reading at the breakfast table, looking up at the moon, or playing on a jungle gym. Here are some fun activities that can help your youngster with reading, writing, math, science, and social studies.



## Breakfast read-a-thon



Add a taste of reading to your child's breakfast. Have him draw a circular "track" on a piece of paper and divide it into 26 sections—one

for each "mile" of his book marathon. (Note: A real marathon is 26.2 miles.) Depending on your youngster's age and reading level, each of his "miles" could be a page or a chapter of a book. Then, he can read at breakfast each morning and color in a section for each page or chapter he reads. How many reading marathons can he complete?

## Money minute

Let your child use spare change to practice addition and money skills. Name an amount that's less than \$1 (say, 16 cents). She tries to use the fewest number of coins to make that amount (1 dime, 1 nickel, 1 penny). Then, she can make the amount using the most coins (16 pennies) or using different combinations (3 nickels and 1 penny, 2 nickels and 6 pennies).

## Where is my team?

Give your youngster an excuse to learn a little geography while he's watching his favorite team play. Help him look up the city where they are playing on a map or in an atlas. What can he tell about the *topography* (geographic features) of the area? (Perhaps it is mountainous or flat.) For an extra challenge, have him use the mileage scale to find out how far away the game is from your hometown. *Variation:* Help a younger child locate the state where the team is playing.

## Road-sign scramble

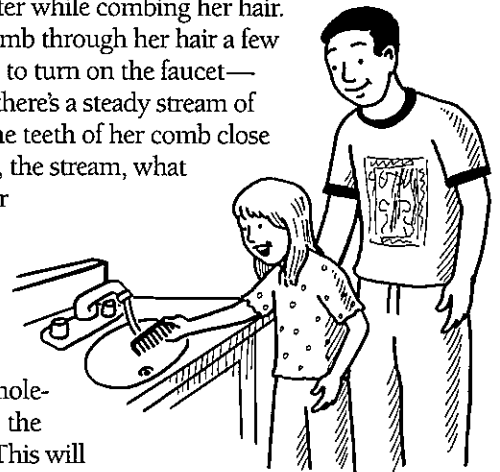
Make a quick word scramble for your child before you go someplace in the car. Think of a few signs you might see (*yield, one way, stop*), and scramble each word or phrase on a piece of paper (*elidy, eon ayw, post*). Have your youngster take the paper along and try to spot the signs to help her unscramble the words. As she plays, she'll practice word recognition and spelling skills.

## Draw the moon

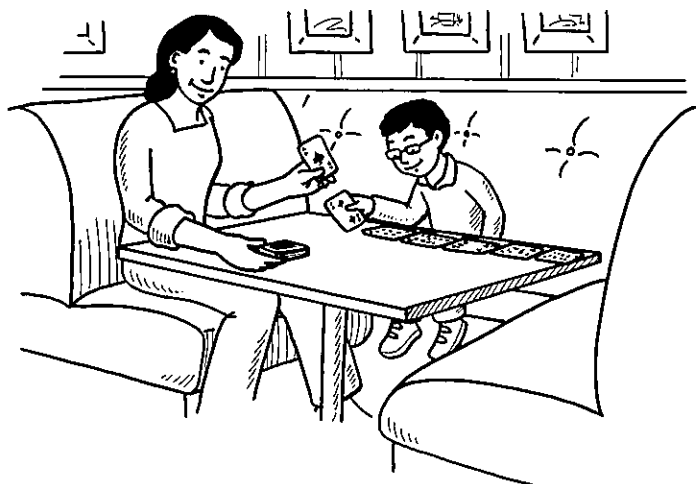
This project will show your youngster how the moon changes from night to night. Just before bed, have him look out a window at the moon. Let him draw what he sees on a sheet of paper. After doing this every clear night for a week or two, what does he notice? (The moon's shape is slightly different each night.)

## Bending water

This science experiment lets your child bend a stream of water while combing her hair. Have her pull the comb through her hair a few times. Then, ask her to turn on the faucet—just enough so that there's a steady stream of water. If she holds the teeth of her comb close to, but not touching, the stream, what happens? (The water bends toward the comb.) That's because the comb is charged with static electricity from her hair, and the water molecules are attracted to the charged comb. *Tip:* This will work better on a dry day.



continued



**Measure it**

Going to a restaurant? Take along a deck of cards (or pad of sticky notes). Your youngster can work on measurement and estimation while you're waiting for your food. Ask him to measure the table, menu, chair, and other items—with the cards. Before he starts, have him estimate the length. ("How many cards long do you think this table is?") Then, he can line up cards end to end to check his guess and tell you how many he used. ("This table is 24 cards long.")

**Outdoor geometry**

Shapes, angles, lines ... the playground is full of opportunities to discover geometry. Make a geometry scavenger hunt before your next visit.



On separate index cards, you and your child can draw shapes and geometric figures (circle, square, rectangle, triangle, right angle, parallel lines). Then, take the cards

with you to the playground—can she find each one? For example, the legs of the swing set form a triangle, and the ladder on the slide has parallel lines.

**Rubber-band race**

Try this contest to see which family member can make a rubber band fly the farthest. Your youngster will get a lesson in motion and energy. Making sure to stay a safe distance apart, have each person slip a rubber band over his finger, pull it back, and let go to launch it across the yard. Ask your child

what happens if he barely stretches it (it doesn't go very far) or if he stretches it as far as possible (it flies farther). Explain that the more he stretches the band, the more energy he gives it, and the farther it will go.

**Memory cards**

While sorting through outgrown clothing or toys, give your child a reason to write. Suggest that she fill an index card with a memory about the item she has outgrown. ("I remember wearing these jeans to go fishing with Daddy. I caught my first catfish on that trip.") If the outfit will be handed down to a younger sibling or cousin, she can share the memory card—maybe the recipient will be able to add her own memory, and a family heirloom will be created!

**Video history**

Family movie night can encourage your youngster to explore history. Look for family movies set in other time periods (for example, *Mary Poppins* takes place in 1910). Together, compare how things are in the movie with how they are now. You could also encourage your child to learn about historical events that happened in the same time period by reading library books or searching online at a website like *brainy history.com*.

**Idea notebook**

When you're on the go, use everyday opportunities to help your child discover new interests—and boost his motivation to read about them. For instance, he might be fascinated by a snake he spots at the pet store or curious about black-and-white photography he sees at an art fair. Suggest that he keep track of these new interests in a notebook. Then, he could use the notes to help him select books at the library.



**What's cooking?**

Your youngster can practice descriptive writing by making a dinner menu for your family. Show her a few take-out menus or online menus so she can see how foods are described ("A thick slice of creamy cheesecake topped with plump, juicy strawberries"). Then, let her know what's for dinner and have her draw pictures and write descriptions of each course ("Fresh green salad with ripe cherry tomatoes and sweet, tangy raspberry dressing"). She can post her menu on the refrigerator or write it on a chalkboard.