



# "CORE"tastic Kids Newsletter



## Handwriting Tips

### Mystery Box

The Literacy Mystery Box activity is a fun way to spur a daily writing activity. Use this as an intriguing opportunity to support a daily lesson.

The mystery items could be objects or representation of objects that will be referenced in a story your class has read recently, or it could be a random object that lends itself well to description, like a postcard with a pretty picture, a painting, an interesting, or an uncommon fruit or vegetable (like a radish, a star fruit, etc.). It could be something that will introduce a new unit of **study** (oceans, ancient Egypt, astronomy, etc.). You can use these items to make science, math, or history connections.

Put the mystery item (s) in the box.

Have students ask complete questions to guess what the item is. This is a good way to reinforce good sentence/questions skills.

When students guess the item, extend the discussion.

If the item lends itself well to description, ask students to write about it using as many adjectives as they can.

You can also have them write a how-to about how they would use the object, in as much detail as possible.

**Pre-K & K:** Replace writing with speaking. Have younger students guess what the item is and then describe it with as many adjectives as they can think of. Write the word on the board for them so they can see it as you are talking about it.

**Grades K-2:** Younger students can write one or two sentences about the object.

**Grades 3+:** Older students can write a paragraph or more about how they think the object was made.

Article from Handwriting Without Tears - <http://www.hwtears.com/newsletter/may2010/mysterybox>



*Where performance meets potential.*

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### Calendar of Events

Star Performer Camp  
Begins  
August 2

Fall classes begin  
August 23, 2010



### Motivating Kids to Read

*Studies show that the more children read, the better readers and writers they become.*

- Learn more about your child's interests and suggest books, magazines, and articles that relate to those topics.
- Sometimes good movies are a starting point for pleasure reading — after seeing a movie based on a book, children will be motivated to read the book.
- Sometimes travel sparks reading, and finding books that relate to a place you visit on a family vacation can get a child hooked.
- Keeps books and other reading materials at home.
- Read books with your children! Children of any age can appreciate being read to.
- Be a good role model — let your children see you reading.

# Body Works — From the Inside Out

## Can Pickle Juice Stop Cramping?

An article written by Gretchen Reynolds in the New York Times may be the answer. In a 2008 survey, a quarter of the athletic trainers interviewed said that they regularly dispense pickle juice to cramp-stricken athletes. A group of Utah volunteers began with a series of 30-minute bicycling sessions, using a semi-recumbent bicycle, configured so that only the leg pedaled. The laboratory was warm, increasing the amount the exercising men sweated. Each cycled in 30-minute bouts until each had lost 3 percent of his body weight through perspiration, a widely accepted definition of mild dehydration.

The young men were then fitted with a contraption that electrically stimulated, causing a muscle in the big toe to cramp. As soon as the toe cramps began, each man downed about 2.5 ounces of either de-ionized water or pickle juice. The reaction, for some, was rapid. Within about 85 seconds, the men drinking pickle juice stopped cramping. But the cramps continued unabated in the men drinking water. Pickle juice had "relieved a cramp 45 percent faster" than drinking no fluids and about 37 percent faster than water.

What, then, probably causes athletes to cramp? The pickle-juice experiment provides some intriguing clues. "The pickle juice did not have time" to leave the men's stomachs during the experiment, Dr. Miller points out. So the liquid itself could not have been replenishing lost fluids and salt in the affected muscles. Instead some other mechanism must have initiated the cramps and been stymied by the pickle juice. Dr. Miller suspects that that mechanism is exhaustion. Certain mechanisms within muscles have been found to start misfiring when a muscle is extremely tired. Dr. Miller suspects that ultimately, it's the vinegar in the pickle juice that sends out nerve signals that somehow disrupt the misfiring in the muscles.



Freedom

is never free.

~Author Unknown

## Math Tips

From around the age of two, your child is developmentally ready to understand the one-to-one relationship between a numeral and objects, knowing, for instance, that two is more than one. To help prepare your child for a true understanding of math:

**Count Together:** Counting fingers and toes from one to ten is particularly fun when accompanied by rhymes such as "one, two, buckle my shoe."

**Sort Objects:** Helping your child put things in like categories aids in his understanding of groups. For instance, have him separate his toy cars from his toy airplanes and then count how many are in each group.

**Set the Table:** Setting one plate (preferably non-breakable) for one person, two cups for two people, and so on helps your toddler learn important math skills.

**Name Shapes:** The naming of shapes is fundamental to your child's understanding of math. Play a game of finding squares and circles in your house or on outings. Show how triangles can fit together to make a square.

**Teach Spatial Relationships:** Play games that require your child to understand the concept of near and far or under and over. Let him practice learning such concepts as volume and quantity by filling cups and bowls with water or sand and transferring contents from one container to another.

**Compare Sizes:** Ask your child to find his big bear and his little doll. Line up his trucks from smallest to largest. Play a game in which your child stretches to be as big as he can be and then curls up to make himself tiny.

**Teach Patterns:** Let your child arrange blocks in alternating color or shape patterns.

**Use Math Concept Words:** Phrases that denote quantity, like "a lot" and "a few," begin to take on meaning when used in everyday conversations.

*From The Parents Book of Lists: From Birth to Age Three, by the editors of Parents magazine with Marge Kennedy. Copyright © 2000*

## Stop Summer Brain Drain

By Lisa Rosenthal

Instead of letting your kids zone out to reruns, help them discover that learning can be fun beyond the classroom. Think summer is a carefree time when kids should put away the books and cut loose? Think again. If you let your children just hang out, they may fall victim to “summer slide,” or the loss of knowledge and skills acquired during the school year.

### Use it or lose it

On average, students who don't engage in summer learning lose the equivalent of two months' worth of grade-level math and reading skills, according to the [National Center for Summer Learning](#) at Johns Hopkins University. “What I worry about a lot is summer reading loss,” U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently commented in *Education Daily*. “You have kids who don't have a lot of books at home and aren't read to. You get kids to a certain point in June, and when they come back in September, they're further behind than when they left you three months ago. It's heartbreaking.”

Other ways kids lose ground over the break:

- Students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do at the beginning.
- Most tend to fall behind in math and spelling because they have fewer opportunities to practice these skills while on break.
- Teachers spend an average of four to eight weeks every fall reviewing material students have forgotten over the summer.
- Kids tend to gain more weight when they are out of school — particularly those who are at high risk of obesity and spend a lot of time playing video games or watching TV.

### Worksheets are not the answer

Keeping up on their learning doesn't mean that children should be studying vocabulary lists and doing math worksheets. Summer is the perfect time for children to discover that education isn't limited to the classroom.

"You don't want your kids to think that learning is only something that happens in places called schools," says Susan K. Perry, author of *Playing Smart: The Family Guide to Enriching, Offbeat Learning Activities for Ages 4-14*. "Rather, you want them to grasp that learning is fun and can go on anytime, anywhere, with handy materials, not only based on the instruction of an actual schoolteacher."

### Summer schooling

Whether you are taking a trip to a far-off place or staying in your own neighborhood, there are ample opportunities for your children to grow and learn. But be careful not to over plan. "To avoid boredom, a child has to learn to be motivated on his or her own to a certain extent, and that is an acquired skill," says Perry. "If every time your child says, 'I'm bored' you step in with a quick solution, they'll never learn to develop their own resources. But do provide some options. Just don't try to instill learning. That's not how it works."

### Ideas for summer learning:

1. **Organize a book club for kids.** It's a great way to foster a love of reading and get kids talking about books. Depending on their age, kids can organize their own or have their parents join in. For tips on how to do it, read "[It's Not Just for Oprah: Book Clubs for Kids.](#)"
2. **Plant a garden.** It's all the rage now that First Lady Michelle Obama has started a vegetable garden on the White House lawn. Kids who tend a garden will learn about dirt, seeds and seedlings, where food comes from and more. Plus it's good exercise. You can plant a garden in your backyard or get together with other families to start one at school or on a community plot.
3. **Get theatrical.** Gather a group of kids together to perform a play. They can write their own script, act out a story they have read or memorize a play. Family and friends make a great, supportive audience! Check your local library for *Lively Plays for Young Actors: 12 One-Act Comedies for Stage Performance*, by Christina Hamlet, or other books with plays for young people.
4. **Visit a planetarium, science museum, or zoo.** Many science museums have special summer programs geared for kids, in addition to interactive exhibits to engage them. A summer field trip will make science come alive.
5. **Build or bake.** When you help kids bake a cake or build a bird feeder, they learn about measuring and reading directions. They'll also have the pleasure of creating and sharing a finished product.

## Visual Attention

Visual attention is the ability to use the eyes to gather information about one's surroundings. It can be a life-saving tool. You can increase your child's visual attention by introducing him to a few simple concepts and games.

- Require your child to look you in the eyes when you are speaking with her. By insisting that she make and maintain eye contact with the speaker, you will eventually foster her habitual cooperation.
- Say "Look with your eyes, not with your hands" whenever your child is tempted to grab things from a store shelf or a friend's table. Repeat this phrase before entering a store or museum to reinforce the idea that this polite behavior will be required if the child hopes to return to this place again.
- Play games that require visual attention while you are in the car. "I Spy" is a great one. Take turns giving a clue, such as "I spy something that is yellow," when you are passing a McDonald's restaurant sign with its golden arch. The person who guesses correctly gets to provide the next clue. Another great game is to seek the letters of the alphabet in order on signs and license plates. You can also try to find license plates from all 50 states while on a long trip.
- Build your child's ability to recreate visual images from memory by quizzing him about places or things that he has seen and experienced. Ask him about the remembered visual attributes: color, size, shape, location.
- Stop occasionally when you are reading aloud to your child. Ask her to describe the scene in the story or what a character looks like. Answering this kind of question takes a high level of visualization. Not only does your child have to comprehend the words in the story accurately, she also has to access her visual memory bank.
- Test your child's visual memory by placing an assortment of objects in a paper bag. Ask him to place his arm inside the bag and grab one item. Before he can remove the object from the bag, he must guess what it is. This also is a fun party game. Children who correctly guess what they are touching without first seeing the object are developing acute visual attention skills.

## Exercise of the Month

### The Rocking Horse

This is a weight-bearing exercise that strengthens ATNR (asymmetrical tonic neck reflex). Have the child make the cube position and bring her head down so that her head is level with the back of her body. Have the child turn the chin to one shoulder and rock back and forth 10 times. Turn the head to the other shoulder and repeat. Be sure both shoulders move past the hands, to create the "weight-bearing stress". The toes remain on the floor. Extension of the knees and hips is important!

The ATNR should inhibit itself by the age of 6 months. Some children's reflex remains active and the child may show signs of difficulty with eye-hand coordination, ability to cross the midline, discrepancy between oral and written performance, bilateral integration and balance. The rocking horse exercise can help to integrate these reflexes.

Reference: Athena Oden, P.T., [Ready Bodies Learning Minds](#)

