

# How To Give Your Kids A Really Good Education While They Are Out of School

-Michael Farris

You need not and probably should not try to emulate what your kids were doing in school. This unfortunate situation gives every parent a chance to ensure that their children have some basic tools for learning that will serve them well for the rest of their lives.



1. Have your kids read aloud to you.

For little kids, this is by far the most important thing you can do. Forget the nonsense modern methods. Teach them phonics. After all, they are learning to read English. And in English, letters make sounds.

2. Read aloud to your children.

Pick great books. Pick things your children understand but may be a bit over their own reading level. For pre-school kids, this is by far the most important thing you should do.

3. Make sure your children can add, subtract, multiply, and divide.

By themselves. No calculators. Learn to carry and borrow. Learn how to express remainders in division as fractions. Old fashioned math.

4. Do math time tests.

When you know math well enough to do it fast, you know math.

5. Work on spelling.

Find lists of commonly misspelled words and learn how to spell them. Start with the difference between lose and loose. It drives me crazy when I see supposedly well-educated adults repeatedly confuse those two.

6. For heaven's sake teach them that you do not use apostrophes to make a word plural in the vast majority of cases.

Make them write lists of dozens and dozens of words and make them plural.

7. Expand their vocabulary.

Get vocabulary lists. Make lists of words from the books you read to them and they read. Learn to spell them and their meanings.

8. Have them read good books. Better yet, great books.

Read an equal number of books from the following time periods:

Before 1800

1800-1900

1900-1950

1950-present

Some of my favorites.  
The Chronicles of Narnia  
Anything by David McCullough (histories)  
Uncle Tom's Cabin  
Cry the Beloved Country  
My Grandfather's Son by Clarence Thomas  
The Scarlet Pimpernel  
Great Expectations



9. Write book reports  
Short summary of the book.  
What lessons was the author trying to teach?  
What did you learn from the book beyond facts?

10. Learn to do critical analysis  
Find a news article or opinion piece. Find an article expressing the opposite view.  
Ask: who understood the facts more accurately.  
And: whose arguments were more persuasive.  
Write a summary of your own views after doing the above.

11. Work on geography.  
Learn every state and its capital. Population of every state. Major cities in every state. Rivers. Mountains.  
For world geography. Learn them by continent.  
Country and capitals.  
Population.  
Major industries and products.  
Religious groups.  
Languages.  
Type of government.  
Average income.

12. Have your child write a first person history of this crisis.  
Impact on them. Family. Community. Local businesses. Nation.  
This will be a major event in world history. They can read this to their grandchildren.

There are many other things that can be done but I have emphasized the basic tools of learning. Science is down-wind from math. Most everything else uses words. Master math and words and you can do pretty much anything.

If your children do these things it may be the best school year of their life.

Oh...by the way...you notice I didn't give you links on how to find all these things on the internet. Learn to research. Both you and your child need to know how to do that.



For those who don't know me, I am the founder of Home School Legal Defense Association. I was also the founding president of Patrick Henry College where I taught Constitutional Law. My wife and I homeschooled our ten children for 33 years. Our youngest two are PhD students—one at Notre Dame (biomedicine) and one at Michigan State (nuclear physics). I was named one of the Top 100 Faces in Education of the 20th Century by Education Week.