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ASSIGNMENT FOR SUMMER

By now the kids have been out of school for a while. Chances are they have had time to decompress and enjoy some well-earned rest and relaxation. If your children are anything like mine were, they are beginning to get a bit bored by now and could use a little structure in their lives.

My daughter came up with a good plan for her twins, age 8. They are each expected to read a book a week and write a short book report. They can pick the book they want to read. They are free to read as many books as they like but the report on one book is due every week just like school homework. Your children should make a chart so they can list the book they start each week and check off when they turned in their book report.

This is a good idea. Yes, children need free time, do-nothing time, daydreaming time. But they also need some structure even in the summer. We all need structure but grownups have a wide variety of things to do both at home and at work and these tasks impose structure. Children have a more limited repertoire. And, alas, all too often these days they meet their "There's nothing to do!" needs by watching TV.

One book a week is not onerous. They still have plenty of time for summer activities and play, both solitary and with friends. Self-selection of the book-of-the-week gives them the autonomy to explore new types of books and new authors or read more books by an author they like.

And this activity, both the reading and the writing part, is completely portable. They can take their summer assignment with them to visit Grandma and Grandpa or go on vacation with their parents.

All it adds to your parental tasks is a few trips to the library and the time to read 12 short book reports (unless you have twins, then it's 24!).