



## Engaging Educational Activities for Winter Break

Holiday breaks present important opportunities for continual learning. Instead of preparing voluminous packets of worksheets for students to complete, please encourage your students and families to learn together and enjoy the wonderful resources that our City has to offer.

### Fun Family Activities for Young Children

- WNET Holiday Happenings in NYC [www.nyc-arts.org/collections/117762](http://www.nyc-arts.org/collections/117762)
- Kid Fun in Grown-Up Museums [www.nyc-arts.org/collections/37742](http://www.nyc-arts.org/collections/37742)
- *The Grinch's Holiday Workshop* at the Children's Museum of Manhattan – through December 31
- *Rockefeller Center Tree* – through January 7
- *City Harvest Gingerbread Extravaganza* at Le Parker Meridien – through January 6
- *New York City Transit Museum Holiday Train Show* (Grand Central Terminal) – through February 23
- *Super Sabado* – Super Holidays at El Museo del Barrio – through December 21
- *Powerhouse on 8<sup>th</sup> Kids Readings 2013* (8<sup>th</sup> Avenue & 12<sup>th</sup> Street) – until June
- *Fractured Fables Puppet Theatre* (Bank St. Bookstore) – through February 23

### More Opportunities to Take Advantage of NYC

New York City is home to more than 1,200 cultural venues, including more than 500 galleries, 375 nonprofit theater companies, 330 dance companies, 150 museums, 96 orchestras, and 40 Broadway theaters. Many offer free hours or suggested admission. During the winter break, make time to go to a museum or performance.

- The Department of Cultural Affairs has an online guide that allows you to search for free and kid-friendly events. Search for events on the NYCulture Calendar. [www.nyc.gov/html/dcla/html/calendar/calendar.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcla/html/calendar/calendar.shtml)
- For a useful tool to make the most of your visit to a NYC museum go to Parent Guide: Tips for a Successful Visit to an Art Museum [schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/ParentResources](http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/ParentResources)
- For students, make the most of your visit to a performance or museum by asking questions about what you expect to see and how the experience meets your expectations. See “Questions to Ask” guides at [schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/ParentResources](http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/ParentResources)

### Activities to Support Reading & Information Literacy

Vacations are a wonderful time for students in any grade to practice the key components of literacy – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Here are some ways your child can practice literacy at home:

- **Read Up on Current Events:** Use a newspaper or go online to <https://newslela.com>. Find an event each day that interests you and read it on your own or have someone read it to you. Talk about it with your parents, other family members, or friends. Then create a news notebook, taping the article into the notebook, stating why you chose it, what you learned from it, and what everyone's views were about it.
- **Use Sophisticated Vocabulary:** Before dinner, choose an article from the newspaper that every member of your family will read. During dinner conversation discuss what you learned from the article and what you think about the article. Ask a few questions as well. As you converse be sure to use the sophisticated vocabulary of the article. You might elevate this work by exploring multiple sections of the newspaper. Mondays might be international news stories. Tuesdays might be science articles. Wednesday might be sports stories, and so on.
- **Be a Questioner:** When you read something, especially something interesting or challenging, develop some questions about it. These can be questions you ask yourself or questions you asked other people. If you get stuck, you can always use the five w's: who, what, when, where, why—and how. You can do this with things you read and also with things you watch on television or on line.
- **Daily Reading:** Choose one or two pleasure books that you are reading just for fun. Find a warm, quiet place to curl up and read for 45 minutes each day. ENJOY! If you can talk to someone about the book, that's great, but the most important thing is to read.
- **Family Book Club :** Choose a book that the whole family reads. Set a date for when you will all be finished reading the book and then come together to discuss!
- **Write On!**
  - Write a poem, essay or story and submit it to TeenInk.
- **Visit a few Great Web Sites**
  - [www.GuysRead.com](http://www.GuysRead.com)
  - [jamespattersonya.com/series/homeroomdiaries](http://jamespattersonya.com/series/homeroomdiaries)
  - [www.TeenInk.com](http://www.TeenInk.com)
  - [www.rif.org/kids/readingplanet.htm](http://www.rif.org/kids/readingplanet.htm)
  - [www.storylineonline.net/](http://www.storylineonline.net/) -- online audio stories
  - [en.childrenslibrary.org/](http://en.childrenslibrary.org/) -- stories from around the world
  - Reading Rockets for ages birth - grade 6 [www.readingrockets.org/article/25-activities-reading-and-writing-fun](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/25-activities-reading-and-writing-fun)

- PBS Parents Reading Activities [www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language/reading-activities/](http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language/reading-activities/)
  - PBS Raising Readers Stories & Activities [pbskids.org/island/activities/](http://pbskids.org/island/activities/)
  - Phonics Reading Practice & Games at Starfall [www.starfall.com/](http://www.starfall.com/)
  - Scholastic Reading Activities for Ages 6-7 [www.scholastic.com/parents/activities-and-printables/activities/reading-and-writing/reading-activities/ages-6-7](http://www.scholastic.com/parents/activities-and-printables/activities/reading-and-writing/reading-activities/ages-6-7)
  - Scholastic Interactive Student Activities [www.scholastic.com/teachers/student-activities](http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/student-activities)
  - Parent Activities at readwritethink - [www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/](http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/)
  - Adapted Mind.com for grades 1-8 [www.adaptedmind.com/gradereading.php?grade=1](http://www.adaptedmind.com/gradereading.php?grade=1)
  - ReadWorks – [www.readworks.org](http://www.readworks.org) Once you register you have access to hundreds of reading passages as well as questions to assess comprehension of the passages. The questions have been aligned to the Common Core standards. Parents can search and identify passages by grade level.
- **Readers Theatre:** Create a script from a book you are reading and practice it with your family, friends, and neighbors. Or, use one that someone else has created for practice building fluency, speaking and listening skills. When you read these, think like an actor. **Here are some prepared scripts you can use for free:**
    - [www.timelessteacherstuff.com](http://www.timelessteacherstuff.com)
    - [www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm](http://www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm)
    - [www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE.html](http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE.html)
    - [www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/readers-theatre-172.html](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/readers-theatre-172.html)
  - **Check out several books from your school library or classroom library to take home and read over the break.**
  - **Create a bookmark of your favorite book (a 6"x2" bookmark is the perfect size).**
  - **Read a book to a family member or a pet.**
  - **Visit your favorite author's website and learn more about the author and his or her books.**
  - **Make a craft, create a delicious treat, or build something unique from a how-to book.**
  - **Write a new ending to your favorite book.**
  - **Write a letter to an author of a book that made an impression on you.**
  - **Read a book and then watch the movie. Compare and contrast.**

- Create a comic strip of your winter break.
- Interview and photograph family members to make a book.
- If traveling, find books (fiction and nonfiction) about that place in your school library to read before and during your trip.
- Read books about your favorite places in New York City and visit them during winter recess.

## Ways to Help Children Develop and Strengthen Their Math Skills at Home

**Cooking:** Sequencing, fractions, ratios, and measurement are just a few of the skills required in following even the most basic recipes, and you get to create delicious food with your child.

**Shopping:** As you shop, challenge your child to estimate or count the number of items you are purchasing or the cost of the items. Challenge your child to figure out how much money to expect back in change, helping him or her to practice mental calculations. Other opportunities during shopping include comparing two or more items and determining the relative values based on ratio of size to cost. Encourage your children to compare sizes, weights, capacity, and liquid measurement. Ask your child to find the largest container of milk and explain why it holds more than the other containers.

Numbers and shapes are all around us! Look for numbers and shapes in the environment (addresses, sports statistics, weather forecasts, license plates, prices, signs) and talk about what they mean and how they are used.

**How long does it take?:** Explore time by asking your child to estimate and then time how long it takes to complete different activities. Which of your child's estimates were close to the actual time? Which were farthest away? Can you name an activity that you think will take less than five minutes? Try it and see how close you were. Don't forget to notice the time you start and end an activity so that you can see how long it lasted; this will help children understand the passage of time.

**Puzzles and origami:** Puzzles help develop spatial skills. Being able to notice shapes and patterns in puzzles will allow your child to easily pick up geometry concepts taught in school. Origami (the Japanese art of paper folding) strengthens awareness of shape and symmetry, and also requires children to follow directions in sequential order.

**Play games:** Board games like Monopoly, Clue, Chutes and Ladders, and so many others all provide math skills practice, computation, and logical reasoning. Card games like Twenty-One or Hearts will provide your child with basic fact computations.

**Have conversations that relate to everyday life and incorporate math questions:** When traveling in a car or a bus, children invariably ask, "When will we get there?" Use the question as an opportunity to do some math. Count the number of exits and/or stops before you get to your destination; talk about miles to your destination and how



fast you are driving so that your child can answer the question. Pose “wonder” questions, such as: How tall is that tree? How many seats are in this room? How many people are in front of us on this line? Figure out the answers to these questions together. Ask your child to tell you what he or she thought about when answering the questions.

## Science Family Activities

New York Hall of Science – Design Labs <http://nysci.org/?s=design+labs>

In the newly created design labs at the New York Hall of Science, parents and children can engage in activities, experiments, and challenges that provide a deeper understanding of engineering and the design process. Design Labs is a space for tinkering and creative problem-solving for families. Using simple tools and everyday materials, the open-ended problems invite kids to wrestle with STEM topics and come up with their own creative solutions.

New York Botanical Gardens – Train show [www.nybg.org/exhibitions/2014/holiday-train-show/index.php](http://www.nybg.org/exhibitions/2014/holiday-train-show/index.php)

Children can enjoy the train show as they explore the engineering and design that was used to create over 150 New York City miniature landscapes. Nuts, bark, leaves, and other plant parts can be identified as the children explore the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, the Statue of Liberty, and many more.

Kinetic City – A Touch of Class – [www.kineticcity.com/mindgames/grinder/](http://www.kineticcity.com/mindgames/grinder/)

Science is all around you. Your backyard, kitchen, and other areas around the home provide natural "laboratories" for children. Children are curious; exploring with science can be lots of fun while also teaching them a great deal about themselves and their world. In the interactive science story game, children can learn many interesting facts about different plants and animals. Each question asks the child to select the plants or animals that have certain characteristics. Your child will learn science through play.

The Science of Cooking – [www.exploratorium.edu/cooking/index.html](http://www.exploratorium.edu/cooking/index.html)

Discover how a pinch of curiosity can improve your cooking. Explore recipes and activities, and Webcasts that will enhance your understanding of the science behind food and cooking. Find out how different candy is made and then make your own. Or try making a “naked egg.” Children and adults can work together to understand the science behind the food they eat.

Bio-Interactive – [www.hhmi.org/biointeractive](http://www.hhmi.org/biointeractive)

Adolescent children and their parents can share the wonders of scientific inquiry through virtual labs, such as the Bacterial ID lab and the Lizard Evolution Virtual Lab. Created by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, these virtual labs are both enjoyable and educational for the entire family.

Fun Science Activities for you and your family – [www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/parent\\_resources.shtml#scienceactivities](http://www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/parent_resources.shtml#scienceactivities)

Any time can be the right time to explore science. These fun science activities take favorite experiments and demonstrations and let you explore them at home. Materials are easy to find. Most activities take an hour or less, and the science learning is limitless.



Home Experiments for the Whole Family - [scifun.chem.wisc.edu/homeexpts/homeexpts.html](http://scifun.chem.wisc.edu/homeexpts/homeexpts.html)

Enjoy a variety of explorations – from floating soap bubbles to making raisins dance. The activities found here are both entertaining and educational. Children and adults can learn about the nature of materials together.

Outdoor Bonanza – Have your child design a garden or park where he or she can attract native animals. Design the type of plants and trees that will be in the park or garden. Then show the native animals that will be attracted to this space because of the food sources you added to your design. Make a food web showing all of the organisms in your yard or park. Remember to draw or take photos of the space you have created.

What’s for Dinner? – Children and adults can discover the benefits of the types of food that they eat for dinner. Chart the food that you eat for dinner as a family for one week. Then find out where the type of food came from; for instance, if you have salmon for dinner one night, search the Internet and learn where salmon is produced and how it is shipped to New York City. Do the same for all of the food products that you eat for dinner and then create a chart of the cost of the food and the distance it travels. See if you can find any trends in the data that you have collected.

The Tail Wagging the Dog – Many people who have dogs know that dogs wag their tails because they are happy. Or do they? As a family, try to design an experiment that will either support this theory or not. Start by seeing what makes a dog happy and see if there is a connection with the happiness factor and the wagging of the dog’s tail. Make several observations before coming to a conclusion.

## Social Studies Activities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Show your child family photographs. Talk about your own childhood and how it was similar to or different from your child’s experiences.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visit the library to explore books about different holidays and traditions. Read the books together and discuss with your child.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a family tree together.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage children to interview other family members to learn about different cultural and historical events that took place and were witnessed by the family members.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn about the history in your neighborhood. Take tour and look for historic sites, monuments, and markers. Write down the names of the streets, look them up online, and build connections to today.</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a timeline together of your child’s personal life with major milestones along with historic events.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At your local library, look up the front pages of newspapers and magazines of the day, month and year when your child was born. Read the articles together and share how life was the same and different during that time period. What surprised your child about the life and world on his or her birthdate? What connections do the articles make to today?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a letter or postcard to a friend or family member and take a walk to your local Post Office to have it delivered. At the local library, research the history of the post office. What role does it play in our lives? How is communication today changing the role of the post office? How do you think the way we communicate will change in the future?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a train or bus map to trace the route to a destination or family trip. What information does the map provide? How does it help us travel?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record a conversation with a grandparent or a family member about a particular historical event they were a part of. Find out why the event mattered to the family member. What role did they play? How do they want the event remembered? Transcribe the recording and research the event at local library, looking for points of connection and recording new information about the event.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share the meaning of a souvenir, heirloom or emblem that is treasured by your family. Encourage your child to photograph the artifact and write a story about it.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the significance of buildings with flags and monuments in your neighborhood.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk five blocks each way from the entrance of your home and draw a map of your local neighborhood. Write down names and draw symbols for what you see.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice the names of the streets in your neighborhood and explore their meanings.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a free tour with a city park ranger or visit a national park. <a href="http://www.nycgovparks.org/programs/rangers">http://www.nycgovparks.org/programs/rangers</a> <a href="http://www.nps.gov/npnh/index.htm">http://www.nps.gov/npnh/index.htm</a></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss current events with your child; ask them to express their opinion on a political or social issue in the media.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose a historical fiction novel and read it together each day and discuss key elements together. Your local librarian can provide recommendations based on grade level.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play "The Stock Market Game." Show children the stock pages and have them choose one stock and track its ups and downs each day.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using a map or globe, pick out places that you have traveled to or would like to visit. Mark them and create an annotated list that describes the highlights of each place.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforced Global History concepts like global economic inter-dependence by helping your child find imported items in your home. They can be origin of items, foods and clothing. On a map mark or pin each location. Connect the location by drawing lines or using yarn.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve your child in planning a family trip. Ask her to plot the family's itinerary on a map, and find out what type(s) of food, music and art the family will encounter along the way.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch a historical film together and discuss, learn more about the event at your local library.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to music from the parent’s or grandparent’s time period with the parent or grandparent, discuss the songs or dances from that time period and place.</li> </ul>



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Walk the Brooklyn Bridge together and discuss the architecture and geography observed. At your local library research the history of the Brooklyn Bridge.</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take a ride on the Staten Island Ferry together; discuss the architecture and geography of New York Harbor.</li></ul>   |

## Ways to Support Information Literacy and Reading

- Check out several books from your school library or classroom library to take home and read over the break.
- Create a bookmark of your favorite book (a 6"x2" bookmark is the perfect size).
- Read a book to a family member or a pet.
- Visit your favorite author's website and learn more about the author and his or her books.
- Make a craft, create delicious treat, or build something unique from a how-to book.
- Write a new ending to your favorite book.
- Write a letter to an author of a book that made an impression on you.
- Read a book and then watch the movie. Compare and contrast.
- Create a comic strip of your winter break.
- Interview and photograph family members to make a book.
- If traveling, find books (fiction and nonfiction) about that place in your school library to read before and during your trip.
- Read books about your favorite places in New York City and visit them during winter recess.