When a child suffers a concussion during a break from school, parents often wonder if their child will be ready to return when school starts again. Every child’s injury and recovery is unique and requires careful observation from parents and healthcare providers. You can promote recovery and prevent ongoing symptoms by following a “return to learn after the summer” plan like the one below. Your doctor will adjust this plan to meet your child’s needs, and your child will move through the plan at their own pace.

RETURN TO LEARN PLAN

**Step 1:** Immediately after a concussion, your child should take a break from cognitive (thinking) activities for a few days.

At first this may mean avoiding texting and computers, not playing video games and possibly even avoiding television, if it makes symptoms worse. It may also mean staying away from “busy” activities such as swimming, large get-togethers with friends or family, or even summer camp. Your child may participate in activities with low cognitive demands, such as drawing, cooking, and card or board games.

**Step 2:** When you start to see your child’s symptoms improve during rest, allow them to slowly start light cognitive activities. These include things like texting, easy reading, and puzzles such as word search or crossword puzzles. If your child’s symptoms return, stop these activities.

At first, your child may only tolerate five to 15 minutes of cognitive activity at a time. Stop the activity if symptoms increase a lot. Allow your child’s brain to rest, and return to activities when symptoms improve.

**Step 3:** Slowly advance to higher levels of cognitive activity.

When feeling better, your child should try to do some type of higher level cognitive activity. Even though school is not in session, it’s a good idea to work on activities that would mimic schoolwork at home, increasing the amount of time as tolerated. This type of cognitive activity could include summer reading (especially reading activity books where you can answer questions about what you read) or SAT prep questions.

Your child should continue to participate in these activities in short bursts of time (up to 30 minutes) as tolerated and then work up to longer time periods.

Your child should participate in daily cognitive activities until they return to school. Do not try to cram summer reading into the final weeks before school. This plan will help make a smooth transition back to school after concussion.

Questions?
Please call your child’s primary care doctor first. If you have further questions, call CHOP’s Trauma Center at 215-590-5932 or CHOP’s Sports Medicine & Performance Center at 215-590-1527.