

Dear Parents,

Here is a note explaining what to do if your family is taking a vacation during the school year and your first grader will miss several days of school. Usually when a family decides to take a vacation, mom or dad emails me and asks me what to do or to send "homework" or "worksheets" for the time you'll be gone. I need to explain how my classroom works. I don't use "worksheets" very often. Research has shown that filling out worksheets doesn't significantly improve learning. I don't have worksheets that will do what we do each day in class. I don't pass out worksheets and have the kids work on their own. We work together. We interact and discuss. I model a skill and we work together and then the kids try it on their own. We practice skills in journals and on dry erase boards. First grade is 6 hours of interaction and discussion and authentic practice. I can't duplicate that interaction with a worksheet. But I can give you a mini "sub" plan. So you'll be the teacher and you can guide your child in doing things that we do daily in first grade. Here is what your child can do and he/she will need you to work with him/her on most things:

1. **Writing:** Have your child keep a journal. If your trip is in Sept.-Dec., your child needs to write **at least three** sentences per day. If your trip is Jan.-May, your child needs to write **at least six** sentences per day. Help your child generate an idea. Have your child draw a quick illustration to help "map out" what to write. We have lots of ways to "map out" writing pieces. One way is make three boxes for pictures. In the first box he/she draws a quick picture of what happened first. Then in the middle what happened next and in the last box, what happened last. Then help your child generate at least one sentence per picture. Your child needs to do the writing. I don't spell words for kids. Your child needs to "stretch" the word out slowly and listen to each sound. Then your child needs to write a reasonable representation of each sound heard. It is OK if your child doesn't spell the word correctly as long as he/she uses a letter that could represent the sounds heard. Some words can't be sound spelled. I have these words on our "word wall" at school. You absolutely can help your child spell weird words (or any word really—especially if you need to move things along...). But for the most part, your child should be trying to write a letter/s for each sound heard in a word. When the writing is done, your child can add to the illustration if desired. If your child says it is too hard—you need to know that he/she does this at school every day! When your child returns to school, we will be excited to have him/her share the journal!
2. **Math:** Take Compare cards and play Compare and Double Compare. Take your child's homework folder and do as many math "homework" activities as you can. Take copies of any Math Races and have your child practice one each day. Remember the goal is to complete the page in 5 minutes or less and only miss up to 5 problems.
3. **Reading:** Read Raz-kids books. Write a written response (connection—what the story made your child think about) after reading a book. Take your child's homework folder and do as many literacy "homework" activities as you can.

Any items I mentioned above that you would like to have a copy of, can be found on my website: <http://beckysaxton.weebly.com/>

Thank you so very much and have a great trip! Becky Saxton