

Summer reading: No more pencils, lots more books...

It's summertime! Summer around here means snowballs, lots of talk about going to the beach, and signing up for summer reading.

Our boys have an aunt who is a librarian for the [Enoch Pratt Free Library](#), so we always register for their summer reading program—which our sons insist has the best prizes.



So this weekend we headed down to the Pratt's Central Branch. If you are anywhere near Baltimore and you haven't been to that library, you should drop everything and go. The building is absolutely gorgeous, dripping in history, full of friendly faces, and packed with books.

Our boys have been going there since they were toddlers, and Leo knows some back ways. He headed straight for an employee-only door inside, and I stopped him before he could barge through.

We gave our favorite librarian a big hug.



Then we headed to the children's department.

We could spend all day there.



They have toys. They have fish. They have librarians who are prepared to go back in the stacks to dig up apparently-ancient books I remember from my childhood. Who doesn't love [Nate the Great](#) and his passion for pancakes?

The children can even check out the books themselves.



And we registered for summer reading—which is free and gets us all excited to read many, many books this summer. Each of the boys picked out a free book to keep just for registering, and now we are marking down each day of reading as we work toward prizes, including my favorite, the T-shirt. At the end of it all, if we do well, we can win a trip to the Aquarium.

The only way you can top a trip to the Aquarium is by playing chess on the enormous chess board on the library's first floor.

So we did.



Leo played both sides and let his brother make a few great moves. But big brother won in the end. It was fun to watch, especially since John and I don't know how to play.

Then we headed home to read about submarines and the biggest vehicles ever and the sun and Nate the Great and Wonder Woman and a whole pile of other characters we are just meeting for the first time.

Ah, summer reading. It might just be my favorite part of summer—well, after the beach.