

COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION:

# Learning Activities for Children

While your children are at home with you, you want to spend time with them, support their learning, and get your own work done. This guide will help you do all three. Below, you'll find at-home activities they'll enjoy. And page 2 features a fun bingo card—they can check off the items as they complete them.



**Editor's note:** Guidelines are changing rapidly. Make sure to follow all local, state, and federal laws and recommendations on social distancing and other practices when using these ideas.

## Vocabulary art

Tap into your child's creative side while she studies her vocabulary words with these two projects.

**Word collage.** Ask your youngster to write a word and its definition at the top of a page. Then, let her cut out pictures from magazines that go with the word. For instance, if she's studying simple machines in science, she could find pictures of *levers* (seesaw, scissors) or *inclined planes* (wheelchair ramp, playground slide). Have her glue them on her paper and write a sentence to go with each one.



**Rainbow words.** Suggest that your child sort her words by writing them with different-colored pencils in the shape of a rainbow. Perhaps she could use a red pencil for nouns, a yellow one for verbs, and a blue one for adjectives.

## Junk-drawer creativity

Look no further than your kitchen junk drawer to give your youngster's creative thinking a boost. Try these ideas.



### Reuse

Suggest that your child come up with different uses for objects in the drawer. He could use rubber bands to make a ball or turn a cork into a pincushion, for example. Take turns thinking of ways to reuse a bottle cap, a handheld mirror, and other junk-drawer items.

## Sort

Let your youngster sort items according to a secret criterion, and you try to figure out his rule. Say he puts a paper clip and a key in one group, and a coupon and a gift bag in another. You might guess that he's sorting by materials (metal, paper). Next, you sort objects into piles, and have him determine your rule.

## Homemade scale

"My paperweight is heavier than my gymnastics medal!" This balance scale lets your child explore measurement by comparing weights.

### Make a scale

Have your youngster tape two small paper cups to opposite ends of a ruler. Next, she should tape a toilet paper tube to a table (horizontally). Now ask her to balance the ruler on the tube.



### Weigh objects

What does your child want to weigh? Suggest that she gather small items like a toothbrush, a leaf, and a pencil. She can choose two at a time, predict which is heavier, and put one in each cup to find out. The object in the cup that drops down toward the table is heavier than the one in the cup that goes up. If the scale balances, their weights are equal.

*Idea:* As she tests the items, she could line them up from lightest to heaviest.

*continued*



**Instructions:** Do the activities on this bingo card in any order you choose. When you get five in a row (vertically, horizontally, or diagonally), you've earned BINGO. Keep going until you've completed the entire card—that's Super BINGO!

<b>B</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>O</b>
<p>Read a book and create a model of its setting in a shoe-box. Suggestions: Use blocks for buildings, foil for bodies of water, and pom-poms for trees.</p>	<p>Estimate everything! How many steps are on the staircase? Keys on a computer keyboard? Count the steps or keys to check your estimates.</p> 	<p>Start a "list journal," or a notebook full of lists. A few ideas for entries: stuffed animals in your home, songs you can sing, sports you've played.</p>	<p>Gather small toys like a rubber duck and a superhero figurine. Use a flashlight to cast their shadows on paper. Trace around the shadows, then color in the outlines.</p> 	<p>Choose several board games, and mix and match the boards and playing pieces to invent a new game. Write down the rules, and teach family members to play. Be sure to return pieces to their original boxes.</p>
<p>Engineering challenge: Build the longest bridge you can between two stacks of books. Use supplies like index cards, plastic cups, and craft sticks.</p> 	<p>Write letters to friends, relatives, and teachers. You might include drawings, jokes, or even a favorite snack recipe.</p>	<p>Use a 4-ft. piece of yarn to form various shapes (hexagon, square, triangle). Arrange playing cards inside so no cards overlap. Which shape holds the most playing cards?</p> 	<p>Cut out pictures of objects from magazines and catalogs. Glue each one on a separate sheet of paper and staple the pages together to make a picture book. Write a story to go with the pictures.</p>	<p>Study your reflection in a mirror, and draw a self-portrait. Display your portrait on the fridge, and encourage family members to add their own.</p> 
<p>Solve this math puzzle:          ● + ● = 10          ● + ♥ = 8          ♥ + ★ = 4          ● + ★ = ?          Now make up more puzzles like this for family members to solve.</p> <p><i>Answer: 6</i></p>	<p>There are more than 400 words in the word <i>recreation</i>. How many can you list? (Use the letters in any order.) <i>Examples: cat, trainer, race.</i></p>	<p><b>FREE SPACE</b></p> 	<p>Make an audio or video recording of yourself reading books aloud. If you use video, be sure to show your audience the pictures in the books. Share your read-alouds with friends and relatives.</p>	<p>Line up 8 water glasses. Measure 1 oz. water into the first glass, 2 oz. into the second, and so on. Now lightly tap the glasses with a spoon to play a tune. Use two spoons to make harmonies!</p> 
<p>Pitch a reading tent. Drape sheets over chairs, and get books, pillows, blankets, and stuffed animals. Then, snuggle up inside to read.</p> 	<p>Set up a chain reaction. Arrange household objects like dominoes, books, plastic bottles, and balls. Can you make the reaction last for one minute? Three minutes?</p>	<p>Write an acrostic poem for each family member. Each line begins with a letter in the person's name. So the first line of a poem for CAROL might be, "Cheerful like a sunny day."</p>	<p>Create your own museum. Choose a theme, perhaps Legos or nature. Arrange exhibits on a table, and label each one using a sticky note or an index card. Now give someone a tour.</p> 	<p>Use a "pointer" like a chopstick or ruler to read words around the house. Look on food packages, book covers, game boxes, clothing, and more.</p> 
<p>Write a joke book. Cut sheets of paper in half. On each piece, write and illustrate a joke that you know. Then, staple the pages together. After dinner, read your jokes aloud to your family.</p>	<p>Find one item in your home that starts with each letter of the alphabet—from <u>a</u>pple to <u>z</u>ipper. Make a list of the objects you found.</p> 	<p>Look out a window, and graph what you see. You might count trees, bushes, birds, squirrels, cars, and houses. Make a column for each category and draw the items in even rows. What did you see the most of?</p> 	<p>Turn empty cardboard tubes into cute critters like butterflies, elephants, and penguins. Glue on yarn for hair or fur, googly eyes, pom-pom noses, and pipe cleaners for ears or antennae.</p>	<p>Create your own bingo board! Fill it with favorite activities that you can do all by yourself or that your family can do together.</p>

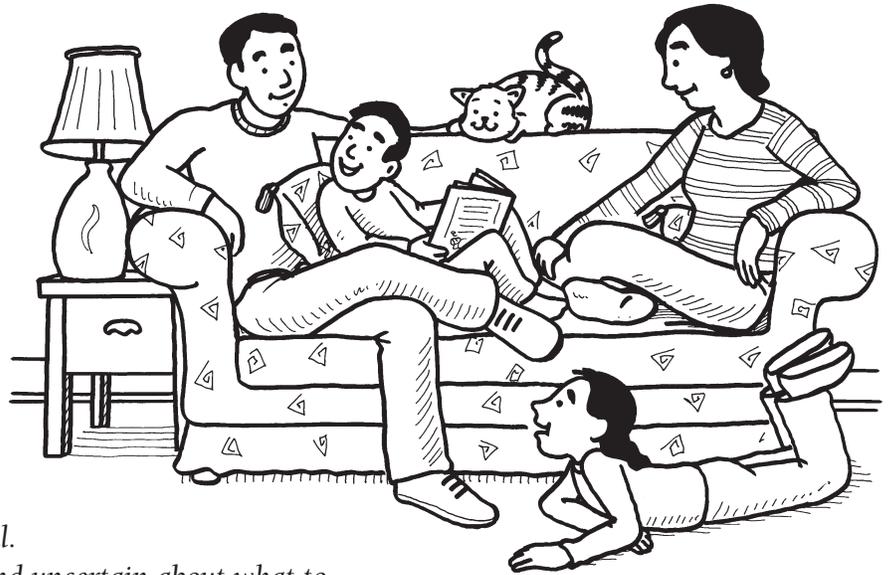
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COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION:

# Support for Parents and Children

Your children's world has changed dramatically over the course of just a few weeks. They're home from school, missing their friends and activities, worried about what's happening in the news—and unsure of when life will return to normal.

As a parent, you may feel overwhelmed and uncertain about what to do. Use this guide as a starting point for supporting your youngsters emotionally and academically during the coronavirus pandemic.



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## Boost well-being

Your children are likely experiencing conflicting emotions. They're probably happy to be home with you—but bored because they can't go anywhere or have anyone over. Here are ways to keep life as close to normal as possible.

**Find the positives.** Look for bright moments each day. For instance, maybe you're not commuting to your job right now, so you have time before work to snuggle up and read with your youngster. Or perhaps a family birthday party was canceled, but now even people who live far away can celebrate with you ... via video chat.

**Stay physically active.** Go for runs or bike rides, and play backyard games. Have everyone put on comfortable clothes and gather in front of the TV or computer for a free fitness class. Try a site like [youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga](https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga) or [lesmills.com/us/workouts/youth-training/](https://www.lesmills.com/us/workouts/youth-training/). Your child's dance or martial arts classes may even be continuing online.

**Encourage play.** Children need plenty of time to play—and this is especially true in difficult circumstances. Pull out old toys they may not have played with in a while. It'll be like getting brand-new toys! They can also turn household items into toys. A cardboard box could become a bear cave, a school bus, or an art studio



(they can color the inside with crayons or markers). A blanket might be a cape, a tent, or an island.

**Enjoy the great outdoors.** Spending time in nature is a proven stress reliever. Take family walks and observe animals, trees, and flowers along the way. Plant a garden. Try stargazing at night or bird-watching in the daytime. Have picnics in the backyard or on your balcony.



### Do for others.

Thinking of others gets your children outside of thinking about the situation they're in. They might make cards for people who are working hard to help us, such as nurses, doctors, and paramedics. They could also use chalk to draw pictures and leave uplifting messages on the sidewalk for delivery truck drivers and mail carriers.

**Manage family time.** Being together 24/7 and unable to leave your home can cause tension among family members. Encourage siblings to play separately when they've had enough of each other's company. Also, it's healthy for parents to have some time to themselves, so relax with a cup of coffee before your child wakes up, or plan at-home date nights with your spouse.

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## Reduce anxiety

It's normal for youngsters—and adults—to feel stressed when their schedules change or life is unpredictable. Consider this advice for helping your children cope.

**Provide reassurance.** Having some control over a situation can limit anxiety. Talk to your child about what your family is doing to stay safe—and to help others be safe.



Examples include washing hands often, staying at home, and social distancing (staying at least six feet away from people who don't live with you).

**Stick to routines.** Stick to your youngster's regular bedtime and wake-up times. Also, encourage her to dress in regular clothes. If she asks to stay in pajamas, consider setting aside a special PJs day

each week. Wearing daytime clothes on other days will contribute to a sense of normalcy. And plan regular mealtimes rather than letting everyone snack all day.

**Limit access to news.** It's important to stay informed, but news coverage can make children feel anxious. Keep the news off, and set certain times each day to check for updates. If you have a young child, you might consider tuning in only after he goes to bed.

## Keep reading!

Reading every day is one of the best ways for your child to keep up skills in all subjects. Try these ideas:

- Set aside time each day to read with your youngster. You could enjoy favorites from your bookshelves and also download e-books from the public library. Encourage him to choose a variety—fiction, nonfiction, poetry, biographies, how-to books, and more. Let him pick books he can read on his own as well as more challenging ones for you to read aloud to him.



- Together, watch authors, teachers, and librarians read aloud online. (Try [storylineonline.net](http://storylineonline.net) or search YouTube for “read alouds.”) Then, suggest that your child make her own story-time videos—complete with props or puppets.

## Learning and working from home

When your children do schoolwork at home, you may wonder what your role is, especially if you're working remotely, too. Keep in mind that teachers don't expect you to homeschool your youngsters—but you can offer support and encouragement, just as you would with regular homework. Here's how.

**Get set up.** Have your child find “office space” and gather supplies. She'll need to work in an area without background noise and where she won't disturb you if you're working, too. If she's participating in classes online, make sure she logs in on time—a few minutes early is ideal in case there's a glitch. She should close browser windows and tabs and put away devices she's not using for school.



**Create office hours.** Help your youngster make a schedule that includes class time and independent work time. If you're working from home, let him know what your hours are. Schedule a lunch break and a snack break so you can eat together. *Fun idea:* Ask your child to make and decorate signs with office hours for each of you. He'll be proud of his signs and may pay more attention to the “posted hours.”

**Offer assistance.** Try to be available in case your youngster gets stuck with her work. If she needs help during your office hours, she could write you a note. Then, provide help when you can take a few minutes away. *Tip:* Show interest by asking what she's learning and looking over her work.

## Stay in touch

Combat social isolation while you are social distancing. Use these suggestions for staying in touch with family and friends via Skype, FaceTime, or other video-chat platforms.

**Spend time with relatives.** Invite grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins to participate in family game nights. It's fun—and it helps to reduce loneliness, especially for people who live alone. Play charades, Pictionary, or name-that-tune.

**Hang out with friends.** Encourage your child to plan online get-togethers. It will feel great for classmates to see each other in real time! They could perform a concert by singing or playing instruments. Or they might make up dance routines. Another idea is to hold a craft party—they can chat while crafting (making jewelry, knitting) and share their works-in-progress with each other.

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