

# HOME WORKING WITH KIDS

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KEY TIPS AND IDEAS TO STAY SANE AND GET  
STUFF DONE DURING COVID-19 SOCIAL  
DISTANCING

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# ABOUT THIS E-BOOK

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In the following pages you will find a collection of different resources to help support you and your children with ideas for homeschooling, activities to try and other useful information. The suggestion is for you to **print the guide** and keep it somewhere handy, so that you can then **dip in and out of it** and **look up different ideas** when you are **stuck for what to do** to keep the children occupied!

This e-book contains the following broad sections

INTRODUCTION - page 1

SOCIAL DISTANCING - pages 2 and 3

Includes why it is important and some examples of what this means in practice

ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE - pages 4 and 5

Includes why this can help and an example routine

RESOURCES AND IDEAS TO KEEP KIDS BUSY - page 6 to 22

Early work/ Reading - page 6

Fresh Air/ exercise activities - page 7

Creative time - includes recipes - pages 8 to 13

Academic and Technology time - pages 14 to 19

Play time - page 20

Ideas for Pre-schoolers - page 21

Ideas for Toddlers - page 22

MEETING YOUR OWN DEADLINES - page 23

A few tips on how to work together as a couple to each get your deadlines met, including teaming up with other families via zoom to virtually take turns supervising school work

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES - pages 24 to 27

Includes ideas, thoughts and resources on how to stay sane, make memories and be kind to yourselves and each other

# INTRODUCTION

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Schools and nurseries have closed in many countries around the world now, and everyone (other than essential services) has been encouraged to work from home. For parents, this is particularly tricky and can put a lot of pressure onto families. As many parents will confirm, doing childcare, home schooling and work all at the same time, is virtually impossible. Luckily, many schools are aware of this (although maybe not all employers) and have been very supportive in the materials and general expectations that they have placed on families. As with all things, a balance will need to be struck. Each family will be different, but presumably we are all dealing with the following questions in some shape or form:

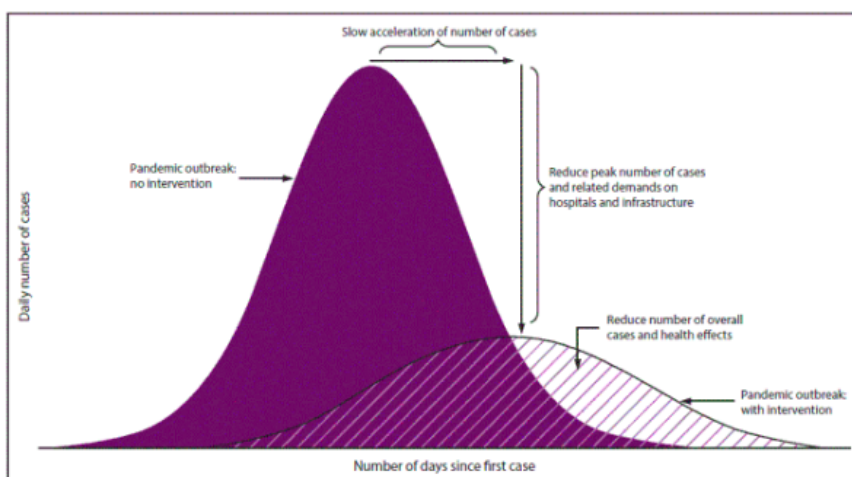
- 1) How do I let my worry about the situation not impact on the kids too much (whether this is financial worry or worry for loved ones or both) - being honest with them about the situation without panicking them?
- 2) How do I ensure they meet the tasks set by school, so they don't fall behind?
- 3) How do I meet my own work deadlines, so I don't fall behind?
- 4) How do I keep everyone happy and healthy?
- 5) What can I do to help the situation overall?

This booklet has a variety of resources for you to try - from ideas for routines, homeschooling resources to working from home tips. I am not an affiliate to any of these, it is simply a summary of what I have come across so far, summarised in one place to make life a bit easier in these tricky times. I have also started a regular blog at: **[HomeWorkingWithKids.blogspot.com](http://HomeWorkingWithKids.blogspot.com)** to create a community where we can share the ups and downs of this journey, as well as additional resources as we come across them. My aim is to publish a post every Saturday morning at 10am.



# WHY SOCIAL DISTANCING?

First of all, I wanted to briefly reiterate the importance of social distancing requested by governments across the world. By avoiding all but essential contact with others we can effectively help stop the spread of the virus, this ensuring that less people get severely ill at any one time (flattening the curve). This means that the emergency services will be able to cope better, and are more likely to have the resources to deal with those most affected. As an intensive care doctor friend of the family keeps telling me - we can collectively save more lives by adhering to social distancing than any doctor can. So please, even though you may be climbing the walls at home, and the kids are badgering you for playdates, stay away from others as much as you can!



Flattening the curve refers to community isolation measures that keep the daily number of disease cases at a manageable level for medical providers. (Image: © CDC)

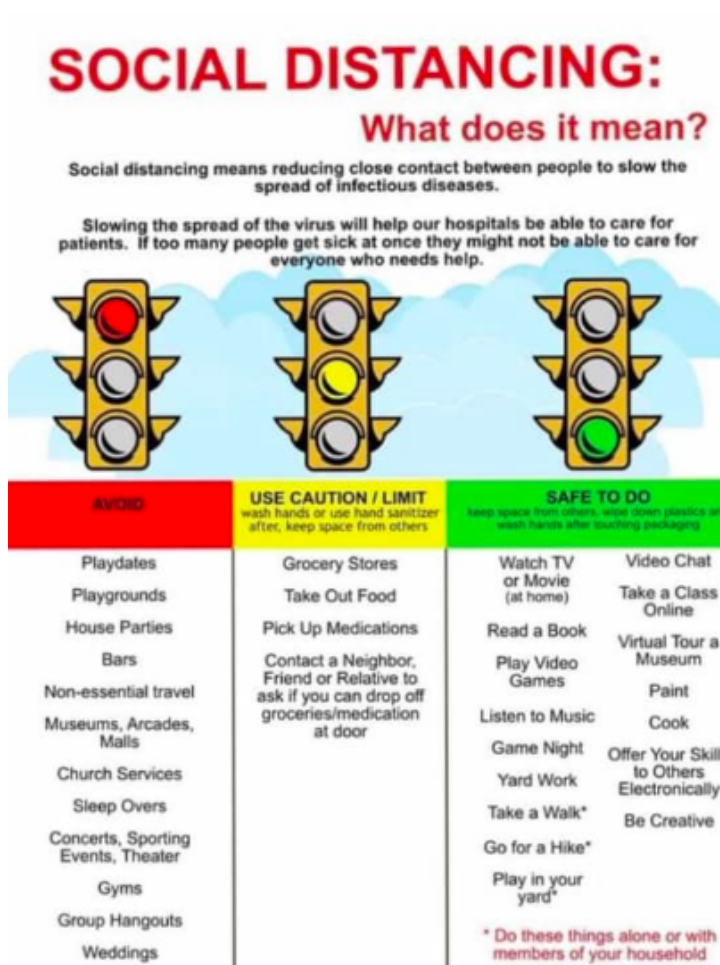
**FIGURE 1.**

*Flattening the curve refers to community isolation measures to keep the daily number of cases at a manageable level for medical providers*



# SOCIAL DISTANCING IN PRACTICE

The World Economic Forum has recently published examples of what they deem to be good (green), medium (amber) and not suitable (red) activities to put social distancing into practice. It is a great starting point, to give us ideas on what we can do. We have to balance this with the need to look out and care for those more vulnerable in the community - even if these are classed as 'amber' activities. One community in the Dales has put a system in place where each household puts a red, yellow or green sign in their front window, indicating whether they are running low on any supplies. This means neighbours are aware of what is going on and can help out where needed.



**FIGURE 2.**

Examples activities to put social distancing into practice. Ass published by the World Economic Forum

# NEW DAILY ROUTINE

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Working from home as adults requires getting into a different mindset and creating a routine can help to get things done while at the same time separating work and home time, as these lines tend to blur more. It is no different for children. They need a **new routine**, too, to understand when it is time to play and relax, and when it is time to do school work. The predictability of this will give them a sense of security and control, when everything else seems ever changing. Some families have even stuck to putting their school uniforms on each morning, to make the distinction even clearer.

The first thing we did as a family was to sit down and brainstorm everything that needed to get done in a day (taking into account what the school requires) and what behaviours we all want to try and exhibit. With everyone at home, potentially stuck indoors for days on end and anxiety levels rising, there was a huge potential to get stressed and take it out on each other. And in the first few days this is exactly what happened. So our family motto has become '**Be kind and patient with each other**'. This is written in big letters at the top of our handwritten routine that takes pride of place on the back of the kitchen door, for everyone to see. The routine is made up of different activities – from doing exercise together, getting out into the fresh air (where possible), doing something creative, reading, maths, working on screens and without, relaxing and having fun together. In the following sections I have given examples or activities and free resources for each of the sections for you to build your own routine around this. Some schools have provided a sample routine to follow, so you can use the following ideas as further inspiration.

# THE ELEMENTS OF OUR ROUTINE

Our routine is based on suggestions from a routine published on Twinkl, as well as the routine provided by the school.

time	activity	comments/ ideas
before 8.30am	Mummy's work time	catch up on work (or sleep, or exercise); Daddy plays with those who are awake and gets everyone dressed
8:30 am	breakfast	set table and clear up together
9:00-9:30	Early work	Handwriting practice, reading; puzzles/ blocks for the little ones
9:30 - 10:00 am	fresh air/ exercise/ fun	family play in the garden, indoor play/ games/ exercise if it is raining or we need to stay in
10:00 – 11:00 am	creative time & snack	drawing, lego/ duplo, magnatics, crafting, baking, dancing, cooking etc
11:00 am – 1:00 pm	nap for toddler	
11am – 1pm	school time/ academic time	school work: complete and upload first activity from teacher; plus flash cards, spelling, maths (no electronics); Reading (including Bugclub),
1:00 pm	lunch	get toddler up to join lunch
1:30pm	chore time	tidy rooms, clean surfaces, empty dishwasher, fold clothes, clean bathroom – teamwork!
2:00 – 2:30 pm	play time	puzzles, games, trains, dolls, garden if weather is nice
2:30 – 3:30 pm	School time/ Academic time	Complete and upload second activity from teacher; plus upload something non-academic onto Seesaw
3:30 – 4:00 pm	Technology time	electronics ok: ipad games, mathletics, german comics
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	afternoon fresh air daddy finishes work (ideally)	bikes, trampoline, play outside, walk
5:15 pm	dinner time	set table and clear up together
6:00 pm	bath time	
6.30 – 7.30 pm	free tv time	popcorn, chill out time
6.30 pm	toddler's bedtime	
7.00 pm	pre-schooler's bedtime	
7.30 pm	primary schooler's bedtime	
from 7.30pm	mummy & daddy's time	exercise, catch up on work, relax

The key elements that I want to expand on in the next section, are Early work/ reading, fresh air/ exercise activities, creative time, school/ academic time, technology time and play time. There is also a section on activity ideas for toddlers and pre-schoolers and some general ideas on how to get your own work done!



# EARLY WORK/ READING

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At my son's school, the children do what they call 'early work' – a quiet time to focus on an individual task such as handwriting practice or reading. The examples below will only really be applicable to primary school children. Older children at secondary school could maybe use this time at the start of the day to plan out what they want to achieve that day.

## Handwriting

- ask your child to trace letters in a tray of sand
- have templates ready for your child to copy letters – joined up, if this is what they are doing at school
- ask your child to write a simple story/ a few sentences in their best handwriting – give them a special notebook to do this in each day
- Go to <https://www.letterjoin.co.uk/> to check out an online resource on handwriting practice; you can sign up for 30 days for free (if your school doesn't offer this already)

## Reading:

- ask your child to read one of their favourite books to you, or take it in turn to read to each other
- if your child is already a confident reader, maybe buy or download a book of their choice to read and ask them to tell you about what happened afterwards
- **Audible** is making hundreds of books **free to support children in this tricky time** – go to the following link for more <https://www.audible.co.uk/>
- If your school has **Bugclub**, this is another great way to get younger children to read – there are challenges and points to collect to keep them focussed, too

# FRESH AIR/ EXERCISE ACTIVITIES

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Other than actually getting out and about – and going for a remote walk in the countryside (while this is still possible, avoiding contact with others) , there are a number of activities you can do in your own home or garden:

## In the garden:

- have a bounce on the trampoline together if you have one
- play tag or freeze tag (when you are tagged, you have to stay still until another player comes to free you)
- do a relay race up and down the garden
- play dodge ball (the kids dodge balls that you roll at them)
- do cart wheels/ handstands/ hop on one leg/ backwards
- ride a bike (in the garden or local park)

## Indoors:

- tune in to the free kids exercise programmes on Prime, such as **Jenny Ford's Cardio workouts** and **Cosmic Kids Yoga Adventures** for Yoga. Both are fun for really young kids, too
- Joe Wicks now does a '**P.E. with Joe**' class on his You Tube channel **The Body Coach TV**. The session is geared towards kids of all ages, is 30 minutes long and runs every weekday morning at 9am – check out the link here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rz0go1pTda8>
- Do a crab race (on all fours) – backwards, sideways or forwards across your lounge
- Play Twister or have a tickle fight
- Put the music on loud and dance like nobody is watching

Whatever you choose – have fun, giggle and get that heart rate up so that you can start the day full of positive energy!

# CREATIVE TIME

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The sky is the limit on this one, and much will depend on what interests your kids have. I have listed below a few ideas that I know I will be trying out with my children over the coming weeks:

## Drawing

This could be anything from just providing the children with some pens and paper, to going all out with water colours and paint brushes. Some kids will love colouring books or paint by numbers books, while others will prefer books that teach them new skills in how to draw. Older children may enjoy painting on silk or canvas. **Rob Biddulph** also **posts a draw-along** video **every Tuesday and Thursday at 10am GMT** that parents could watch with their kids and, hopefully, make some nice pictures. **For more information go to:**

**<http://www.robbiddulph.com/draw-with-rob>**

## Building things

There is a downloadable **Lego 30 day building challenge**, that is great for Lego enthusiasts. Check out the timetable here: <https://www.freehomeschooldeals.com/free-printable-30-day-lego-challenge-instant-download/>

Younger children could join in with the equivalent **Duplo** bricks. Or you could create your own Lego challenge - give one child clear instructions on what to build and ask him/ her to read these out to their sibling. The sibling is blindfolded and needs to build by touch and instruction only. **Maganetics** is another great way to get the kids creatively building different structures. You could challenge them to create a tower higher than 70cm (and get them to measure too), or one strong enough to hold a (boiled?!) egg.



# CREATIVE TIME

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## Crafting

This could be making things from old recycling products. If you wanted, you could add little challenges for your children - for example build a boat that can hold as many pebbles as possible and still float in the sink (or in the bath at bath time); build a tower that is strong enough to hold a toy brick. Alternatively, it can be making beautiful art projects, with glue, glitter, pearls, feathers, stickers, different sorts of paper - whatever you have or can get hold of! And of course, whatever your children enjoy. Another option could be to make something out of **play-doh** together (see **recipe** on following page) - these creations can then be baked slowly on a low heat to harden and preserve them.

## Baking/ Cooking

Get the kids involved in making something edible for lunch or snack time, or make some play-doh for the next creative session. All recipes can be found in the following pages. Jamie Oliver's son Buddy also has a great Instagram site where he shares simple recipes for children to follow. Go to [www.instagram.com](http://www.instagram.com) and follow **jamieoliver #Kids Cooking**

## Dancing/ Singing

If your children are into movies like Frozen, Ballerina or even Dirty Dancing (!), there will be no shortage of ideas from them to create a show for you. Put the music on loud and let them go wild! Or teach them how to do the Macarena (YouTube the moves at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzV63IRR8BQ>) or the hokey pokey. **TheLearningStation** on **YouTube** has an easy video to follow. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZinb6rVozc>.

## Taskmaster

**Alex Horne** has created a family taskmaster challenge for you to complete and upload - a new one is posted on **Twitter** every **Monday** morning at **9am**. Go to @AlexHorne for more information.

# 5 EASY RECIPES

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## Soup or Smoothies

For a **soup**, ask your children to choose their favourite vegetables and get them to help with peeling and chopping. Then slowly fry a finely chopped onion and some garlic in a pan, add the chopped veg and fry until slightly softened. Season with salt and pepper, or if you are feeling adventurous 1/2 a teaspoon each of ground coriander and cumin. Then add about 300ml of stock and boil until the vegetables are tender. Blitz in a blender until smooth. You can add a dash of cream or milk at the end if you like. Throughout the process, get the children involved by tasting, measuring, pouring, stirring and blitzing – just make sure you keep little fingers safe from cutting themselves or getting burnt!

For a **smoothie**, ask your children to choose their favourite fruits and get them to help with peeling and chopping. Put everything into a blender, add some fruit juice, milk or dairy alternative and blitz until smooth. You can even add a tablespoon of smooth nut butter to give the smoothie a bit more depth. Bananas make a great combination with almost any fruit, as do soft summer fruits that you can buy frozen and keep in the freezer for when you next need it.

# 5 EASY RECIPES

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## Flap jacks

Put 125g of butter, 50g of sugar and 1 tablespoon of golden syrup into a saucepan and melt over a very low heat, stirring carefully with a wooden spoon. Then take the pan off the heat and add 225g of porridge oats and 75g of raisins. Mix everything well and pour the mix into a greased shallow tin (approx 18 x 28cm). Press down and bake in the oven (180 C) for 20 minutes. Then lift out and carefully cut the flapjacks into squares. Leave to cool and then store them in an airtight container ready for snack time.

## Energy balls

Combine 2 tablespoons of nut butter of your choice with a cup of finely chopped dates or raisins, add 1 teaspoon of cocoa powder and coconut oil to make pound coin sized balls. Roll in desiccated coconut if you fancy. Experiment with different flavours and combinations and see what you like most!

## Chocolate cake in a mug (from BBC good food)

Mix 4 tablespoons (tbsp) of self-raising flour, 4 tbsp of sugar and 2 tbsp of cocoa powder together, add 1 medium egg, 3 tbsp of milk and 3 tbsp of sunflower oil. Then mix and add a few drops of vanilla essence (or other flavours that you may have). Then add a tbsp of chocolate chips, nuts or raisins if you are using these and mix again. Pour into a large greased mug. Place the mug into the centre of your microwave and cook on high for 1,5 to 2 minutes, or until the cake has stopped rising and is firm to the touch. (<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/microwave-mug-cake>)



# 5 EASY RECIPES

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## Superquick Cheat's Pizza (from Jamie's 30 minutes)

Turn the heat under the fry pan up to high and dust a clean surface with flour. Put 1 1/2 mugs' worth of flour into a food processor, then half-fill the same mug with tepid water and add to the flour with a pinch of salt and a lug of olive oil. Whiz until smooth, then tip on a floured board. Sprinkle the top of the dough and the rolling pin with flour (it will be quite wet, so be generous). Roll the dough to a 1cm thickness. Drizzle olive oil into the pan, then dust dough with flour again and very lightly fold it over into a half-moon shape. Lightly fold the half-moon in half, then move the dough to the pan and unfold it, pushing it down into the sides of the pan. If you don't have a big enough pan, halve the dough and make two pizzas.

For the tomato topping sauce you will need a third of 1 x 400g tin of chopped tomatoes, a few sprigs fresh basil, 1/2 a clove of garlic and a splash of red wine vinegar and olive oil. Put a third of the tinned tomatoes in a blender with a few sprigs of basil, 1/2 a peeled clove of garlic, a splash of red wine vinegar, a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and a pinch of salt. Whiz until smooth. Pour over the middle of the pizza base and spread out evenly. Any sauce you don't use can be frozen.

Then ask your children to pick their toppings. Jamie uses 1/2 a 125g ball of buffalo mozzarella, Parmesan cheese, for grating over, 8 slices of salami, 1 tsp fennel seeds and 1/2 a fresh red chilli. Tear mozzarella into small pieces and dot around the base. Finely grate a layer of Parmesan over, then top with the salami slices. I like to bash the fennel seeds in a pestle and mortar and finely chop the chilli, then scatter over the pizza.

Put the pan under the hot grill for 4 or 5 minutes, until golden and cooked through.

# PLAY-DOH

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## Play-doh

You will need 2 cups flour with 1 cup salt, 1 tsp. cream of tartar, 2 Tbsp. oil and 2 cups waterfood coloring. Mix all ingredients together except food coloring in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until mixture gathers on the spoon and forms dough (about 6 minutes). Dump onto waxed paper until cool enough to handle and knead until pliable.

Store in a covered container or plastic bag. Add food coloring for different colors. Makes about 2 pounds.

See <https://www.livingonadime.com/easy-homemade-play-dough-recipe/> for more ideas, including an **edible play-doh** recipe for the smaller children.

If you want to keep your child's creation (or they do), you can try baking it in the oven. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees. Place the finished play-doh creation on a cookie sheet. You can place a sheet of wax paper under it to protect the pan, but it is not necessary to do so if you are using a non-stick pan. Put the pan in the pre-heated oven for 5 minutes. Gently touch the Play-doh using a toothpick, if it seems soft put it back in for a few more minutes. Larger creations will crack easily. It is better to cook flat creations or bake larger items at a low temperature for a longer period of time as it helps the inside to get hard before the outside starts to burn. See [https://www.ehow.com/how\\_5031512\\_bake-playdoh-make-hard.html](https://www.ehow.com/how_5031512_bake-playdoh-make-hard.html) for more information.

# ACADEMIC AND TECHNOLOGY TIME

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Your child's school will be the best guide here and will likely be setting regular tasks for the children to complete. In addition, there are some great free resources out there, as listed below. But please don't see this as pressure to do more than needed! They are just some ideas to mix things up, if you need to.

## Twinkl

Twinkl is a home learning hub, created for homeschooling. They have made their online resources free over the coming weeks and months.

Go to their link for more information:

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/home-learning-hub>

## Classroom Magazines/ Scholastic

A site that provides day by day learning projects to keep children reading, thinking and growing. They have now created a free learn from home site with 20+ days of learning activities. See the link:

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>

## All in one home school

A homeschooling parent uses the following link as a great free curriculum that includes everything from preschool activities to 12th grade: <https://allinonehomeschool.com>.

This site also includes a list of thinking games by grade here:

<https://allinonehomeschool.com/thinking/>

## BBC Bitesize

This site is full of Learning resources for adults, children, parents and teachers, including online courses, video clips, educational games and revision activities. Over the coming days and weeks they will be changing to bring daily content that supports the nation as schools close across the UK, to help you with your education and wellbeing;

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

# ACADEMIC AND TECHNOLOGY TIME

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The following list of links and ideas was also shared by a parent that regularly homeschools. Check them out!

## Online resources:

- BrainPop
- Curiosity Stream
- Tynker
- Outschool
- Udemy
- iReady
- Beast Academy (maths)
- Khan Academy
- Creative Bug
- Discovery Education

## YouTube Channels

- Crash Course Kids
- Science Channel
- SciShow Kids
- National Geographic Kids
- Free School
- Geography Focus
- TheBrainScoop
- SciShow
- Kids Learning Tube
- Geek Gurl Diaries
- Mike Likes Science
- Science Max
- SoulPancake

# ACADEMIC AND TECHNOLOGY TIME

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Additional fabulous free learning websites that regular home schoolers like to use, include:

<https://www.starfall.com/h/>

<https://www.abcya.com/>

<https://www.funbrain.com/>

<https://www.splashlearn.com/>

<https://www.storylineonline.net/>

<https://pbskids.org/>

<https://www.highlightskids.com/>

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>

<https://www.coolmath4kids.com/>

<http://www.mathgametime.com/>

<https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/>

<http://www.literactive.com/Home/index.asp>

<http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/>

<https://www.switchzoo.com/>

<https://www.seussville.com/>

<https://www.turtlediary.com/>

<https://www.e-learningforkids.org/>

Other useful websites for parents and pupils are:

[www.activelearnprimary.co.uk](http://www.activelearnprimary.co.uk) and [www.mymaths.co.uk](http://www.mymaths.co.uk),  
[www.phonicsplay.co.uk](http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk) and [www.ictgames.com](http://www.ictgames.com),  
[www.bbc.co.uk/schools](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools) and [www.channel4learning.com](http://www.channel4learning.com),  
[www.primarygames.com](http://www.primarygames.com) and [www.coolmaths.com](http://www.coolmaths.com),  
[www.mad4maths.com](http://www.mad4maths.com) and [www.mathszone.co.uk](http://www.mathszone.co.uk),  
[www.crickweb.co.uk](http://www.crickweb.co.uk) and [www.kidsknowit.com](http://www.kidsknowit.com),  
[www.educationquizzes.com](http://www.educationquizzes.com)



# ACADEMIC AND TECHNOLOGY TIME

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## History/ Science/ Art

How about you pretend to travel the world and go on a **virtual tour of these 12 famous museums?**

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>

Time out magazine has recently published an article with the same idea, giving a bit of background to each of the museums and then taking you to the link for the virtual tour:

<https://www.timeout.com/travel/coronavirus-virtual-museum-tours>

## Languages

If your child is learning **another language**, BBC's Bitesize (as listed above: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>) offers great resources. Watching TV in your target language is also a great way to get fluent. You can change Netflix cartoons into a number of other languages by going into your profile and changing the language there. Not all cartoons are available in all languages, so just double check that the programme your child chooses to watch really is in the target language!

Muzzy (BBC), Babble and RosettaStone (to name a few) also offer language programmes, but these cost.

As always, if you speak the language yourself, the best way to get your kids thinking and talking in your language is to speak to them regularly - so you could add a set 30 minutes to your new home school schedule and speak just in your language or get the kids to do a few simple spelling/ writing exercises with you each day. Or leave them notes around the house or in their pockets to find and read :-)

# OUR SCHOOL'S ONLINE RESOURCES

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Each school will have different online resources that they use, and these will need logins and purchasing, but the following are what our school is using - in case you want to suggest any of these to your own school.

Mathletics - maths

Bug Club - reading/ SPAG

2SimplePurpleMash - mixed resources

LGfL - mixed resources

Letter Join - handwriting and spelling patterns

We are also part of the Seesaw portal. Our teacher can message us and post activities each day for the children to complete and they then message her back and upload what they have done at the end of each day. It is a great way to stay in touch, share progress, ask any questions and get reassurance. The teacher can even upload short videos showing how to work out different maths problems or other challenges.

# PLAY TIME

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Depending on the age of your children, they may be able to entertain themselves and play, or you might need some ideas to help them and get involved yourself. Here is a list of some of the things that we enjoy doing together:

## Board or Card games

Kids monopoly, Uno, Snakes and Ladders, Dominos, Scrabble, Lotti Karotti (for the younger kids), Twister, Drafts, Snap, Puzzles

## Creating music

My kids enjoy filling different glasses with different levels of water and then seeing what tunes they can play (!)

## Guessing flavours, smells and amounts

We sometimes do a taste test, where each child closes their eyes and is fed a very small amount of something sweet, sour, salty, or even spicy to guess. You can do the same with smells by allowing them to collect different deodorants, perfumes and other products that have distinctive smells from around the house and each guess what is what. Just keep an eye on what they use, as some products (e.g. cleaning products) may be poisonous if a younger sibling accidentally gets hold of it! To play 'guess amounts' fill different containers with water and get the children to sort them, starting with the least amount to the largest amount. Check by pouring each amount into a measuring jug and making a note of the amount.

## Exploring with the Scouts

Our Beavers leader is publishing regular activities for kids to continue to build Skills for Life at home. See the blog here: <https://seek-a-critique.co.uk/scouting-at-home>

# IDEAS TO KEEP PRE SCHOOLERS BUSY

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There are a number of free resources available - from counting worksheets to colouring in. One good website with lots of fun activities includes the following:

<https://www.earlylearninghq.org.uk/stories/the-very-hungry-caterpillar/>

But pre-schoolers also love to get involved in learning lots of day to day skills - and the Montessori approach is a great way to engage your child with fun activities. The following site has a collection of free materials and activities.

<https://livingmontessorinow.com/free-montessori-materials-online/>

You can also create your own simple activities, such as the following easy examples. In addition, read to your pre-schooler, tell stories together or spot birds/ insects in the garden together!

## Pouring:

Fill a small jug with some water or sand and ask your pre-schooler to pour the water/ sand into a number of different sized cups (and then start again)

## Sorting:

You can cheaply buy different coloured glass pebbles on amazon and then ask your child to sort them into their different colours. Instead of glass pebbles you can use a variety of coloured household objects (paper, pens, kids plates, bowls and cutlery etc), too.

# IDEAS TO KEEP TODDLERS BUSY

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Apart from the beginnings of drawing and mark making, toddlers also love to stack, sort, roll, make things and play easy games. Some ideas below to get you started:

Stack - Get your toddler to stack blocks on top of each other. See how far you can go before the tower topples down, or take it in turns to push each other's tower over (only if your toddler thinks this is funny of course, and enjoys the game!)

Sort - Get your toddler to pour or sort anything of your choosing into different containers - you could use Duplo blocks or wooden blocks for example.

Roll - Sit opposite your toddler and roll a ball back and forth to each other

Make things - using Duplo, Magnetics or play doh, make something together.

Play - do a really easy puzzle together, or a simple memory game with the cards facing upwards and you ask your toddler to match two cards.

These are just a few ideas, there are many more out there on the internet. One good site is this one:

<https://busytoddler.com/2016/11/40-super-easy-toddler-activities/>

Whatever you get up to - enjoy the time with them!



# MEETING YOUR OWN DEADLINES

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With everyone at home and on lockdown, especially when families are not used to this, and maybe worried about health or finances, the atmosphere can be like a pressure cooker. When both parents are working from home and each have their own pressing deadlines to work towards and deliver, doing home schooling and staying on top of the basics such as cooking, washing and cleaning can be impossible.

Parents need to agree who can work when (and then really have uninterrupted time) and what work deadlines need to be renegotiated, if at all possible, to accommodate this form of team work. If deadlines clash, consider teaming up with other parents remotely to take turns running virtual home schooling sessions via zoom (see next page).

Planning ahead with your partner can also work wonders - to see what pressures each of you have at work each week and how you can support each other. You may do this already, but home schooling will require even more dedication than before, especially if your kids are relatively young. Share the load more than you normally would and try and agree set times in the day for each of you to catch up on things (and then stick to these!). At the end of the day, give each other time to 'decompress' and refocus from work to family time.

I think we also all need to be kind to ourselves and recognise that some things will have to give - share the chores among the family as much as possible (these are valuable life skills after all!), and do them in little stints: e.g. all toilets cleaned in 20 minutes on Mondays, bins emptied on Tuesdays, etc. But try not to stress too much, if on some days the washing piles up, so be it. We are in this for the long-haul - no point in burning out in the first few weeks - share the load and take it steady!

# ZOOM FOR SCHOOL WORK

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Zoom is a web-based video conferencing tool that allows users to meet online, with or without video. You can work together on projects and even share or edit on each other's screens.

How about **buddying up with another child/ children and their parents and share school work supervision?** While one household supervises school work virtually, both parents in the other households get to have un-interrupted work time. And then you swap supervision for the next school/work stint.

**Zoom's** basic plan is free and offers a host of features - there is a 40 minutes time limit on meetings with three people up to a total of 25 participants. To get the Zoom app, you simply go to Google Play Store and download it. You need the app to host a meeting, but a Zoom account isn't required to attend a meeting. See <https://zoom.us/about> for more information.

Alternatively, **What's App** also offers free video calls and the functionality when making a call from your laptop includes screen sharing your desktop, too. To install whatsapp, you go to [www.whatsapp.com](http://www.whatsapp.com) from your browser and then download it from the Apple or Microsoft store.

Finally, Facebook has also launched its '**Workplace by Facebook**' functionality that includes a free version and offers a series of services, like photo and video calls and unlimited file, photo, and video storage. Screen sharing is also enabled.

# MAKING MEMORIES

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Despite all the uncertainty and anxiety, this time is also a huge opportunity for us to spend more time with our immediate family, and in particular our children. How often do we get to do bedtime every night when we are working in the office, or play in the garden with them for our lunch break? I hope we and our children will all be able to look back at this surreal, scary time as a time where they also had much more access to us - where they laughed lots, played, built towers, tickled, danced and sang. Where they were taught key things at home, too - about how to treat each other well under stress, how to help out and support each other, how to talk about tricky things that worry you (and be heard), how to be kind, and caring and patient. Let this time not become a trauma for the kids - be genuine, and give them a routine (if that helps you all), but also let go a bit and allow them to make fun meals with you, watch a video (or two) and stay up late every now and again. Be kind to yourself and them, and allow yourself to be a little more wild and carefree in the walls of your own home.

There is lots of great advice on how to protect your **mental health** and **cope with stress** during the covid-19 outbreak, including eating well, not drinking excessively and not binge TV watching. The WHO has some great downloadables, including how to reduce stress in children here: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Other good sites include: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>;  
<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/> and  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-scotland-51955595/coronavirus-mental-health-advice-for-self-isolation>

# CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

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It is also really important to stay connected with friends and our wider family networks - wherever they may be in the world.

This will not only help us feel less alone, it will allow us to share our highs and lows and lend each other support.

There is lots of technology out there, but **zoom**, **what's app** and **facebook** are likely the most popular. See page 23 for more information on each. In addition to live video (and voice) calls each application also has a functionality to record video and voice messages - so you can send your loved ones a message every now and again, too!

Schedule in 'play dates' over video for the kids too - they can not only chat to their friends, but could maybe even play a Board or Card game together? Give it a go and see what works for you!

# STAYING SANE

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Each family will have different requirements of course, as their children will be at different ages and stages - those with older children who are revising for GCSEs or A-Levels have very different challenges to those who are trying to support their primary school children alongside looking after a toddler and pre-schooler. And most of us still need to deliver our own work and keep the household going.

Whatever stage your family is at, I think the most important thing to remember is to get everyone involved and heard in creating the routine - after all, the whole family are in this together and over the coming weeks and months need to work as a team, respecting each other's needs and worries and how each of us cope with the stress differently.

My children are at primary school, pre-school and toddler stages and I have noticed that they all are picking up on the situation differently, but each of them are wanting more cuddles and reassurance, more playtime and more connection. And when I can't give this, their behaviour deteriorates quickly with more tantrums and stubbornness and less cooperation. Everyone's world has been turned upside down, so we owe it to each other to try not to stress too much about achieving everything 'as normal'. Some days will be better than others, so recognise this and be kind to each other. At the end of the day, work and school work will keep - staying sane and connected with each other to come out the other side of this pandemic relatively unscathed as a family unit, is an investment in the future.



# HELPFUL KIDS RESOURCES ON COVID-19

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A number of helpful short children's books have been written to help explain to children what Covid-19 is, what they need to do and to alleviate any of their (and potentially your own) fears. Two that I have come across that my children enjoyed and found useful are:

## 1) **Dave the Dog is worried about Corona Virus**

This book is part of the 'Dotty the Nurse' BBC series and can be downloaded here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-51997381>

## 2) **The Covi Book**

Created by a paediatric nurse, this short book is designed to support and reassure our children, under the age of 7, regarding COVID-19. The book is an invitation for families to discuss the full range of emotions arising from the current situation. It is important to point out that this resource does not seek to be a source of scientific information, but rather a tool based on fantasy. To download it go to:

<https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

Other general resources for parents include:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

[https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1)

<https://www.weforum.org/focus/coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51999864>