

Activities for Kids while Schools are Closed

Kids need to active. Families need to find ways to help keep kids (and the rest of the family) from going stir crazy. Parents are saying, "We love them, but there's a limit!" "It hit us over the first few days, this isn't going to end soon. We need many ways to keep them engaged, and we are concerned about them falling behind in their education."

Here some ideas:

(1) School Assignments for home learning

Some schools have sent home assignments to help students learn and keep-up. If this hasn't happened, email the school and ask for assignments. If this proves unfeasible, develop your own assignments and a regular schedule. Here are examples of what can help:

- >recommended books, reading and writing poetry
- >science projects that can be done at home, topical research-based projects
- >reviews or enhancement of material already taught
- >writing essays reflecting on something watched or on a book
- >writing a daily journal on what is happening personally or in responses to the crisis
- >writing a script and then videoing it (perhaps sharing it via computer with friends)
- >practicing music and art (e.g., a musical instrument, voice, drama, painting)

(2) Special Enrichment and Learning Using Technology

Here are a few free online resources that can be sources of enrichment and learning activity:

- >*San Diego Zoo animal cams* <https://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/live-cams>
- >*Virtual museum tours*
https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours?fbclid=IwAR0_aE4RoHjKjSBWSTeXArNybl4-PIgB8CVAsANa8i8oTaCxF9I5OsnulDM
- >Visit a virtual theater
 - >>*LA Theater Works* <https://latw.org/>
 - >>*Kennedy Center Digital Stage* <https://www.kennedy-center.org/digitalstage/>
 - >>*Metropolitan Opera nightly encore shows*
<https://www.metopera.org/about/press-releases/met-to-launch-nightly-met-opera-streams-a-free-series-of-encore-live-in-hd-presentations-streamed-on-the-company-website-during-the-coronavirus-closure/>
- >Visit the stars
 - >>*Spot the Space Station* <https://spotthestation.nasa.gov/>
 - >>*Stargaze* <https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/whats-up-skywatching-tips-from-nasa/>
 - >>> *What's Up: Skywatching Tips from NASA*
<https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/whats-up-skywatching-tips-from-nasa/>
- >Lessons for learning
 - >>*Share My Lesson* www.sharemylesson.com
 - >>*Field Museum* <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/educators/learning-resources/plantsanimals>
 - >>*Lesson Planet* <https://www.lessonplanet.com/>
 - >>*The Learning Network* <https://www.nytimes.com/section/learning>
 - >>*EdEx* <https://www.edx.org/>
 - >>*Global Digital Library* <https://www.digitallibrary.io/>
 - >>*Khan Academy* <https://www.khanacademy.org/>
 - >>*Learning Equality* <https://learningequality.org/kolibri/> (cont.)

*This document was prepared by the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA. The center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor in the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> Send comments to ltaylor@ucla.edu

- >>NASA Stem Activities <https://www.nasa.gov/stem-at-home-for-students-k-4.html>
- >>NASA podcasts <https://www.nasa.gov/podcasts>
- >>Learn STEM with Snoopy in space!
<https://www.discoverspace.org/education/for-educators/stem-lesson-plans/>

More from NASA

Lesson plans available through SpaceRacers.com offer options for students to conduct experiments and learn about topics ranging from the scientific method to planets in the solar system and different phases of the moon. The lesson plans explain complicated scientific topics like heliophysics (solar physics), earth science, planetary science and astrophysics at a preschool level.

Among the space-themed activities is a coloring sheet that teaches kids about the patterns of stars and constellations. There is also a sun and planets matching game available to download, which helps kids learn the names of the different planets in the solar system and what they look like.

New episodes of "Space Racers," an animated kids' TV series produced in collaboration with NASA experts, will also be released each week on the series' YouTube channel. This free educational content for students offers STEAM-rich entertainment for children during school closures amid the coronavirus outbreak. New episodes to look forward to include "Stardust Rhythm," "When the Envy Bug Bites" and "Happiest Rocket in the World." Educator-approved lesson plans are available at <https://www.spaceracers.com/grownups/> .

>More lessons

- >>Open Culture – offers 1,500 free online courses from top universities
<http://www.openculture.com/freeonlinecourses>
- >>Coursera.org <https://www.coursera.org/>
- >>edx.org <https://www.edx.org/course/subject/humanities>
- >>Scholastic's Learn at Home website
https://go.redirectingat.com/?id=92X1590019&xcust=livescience_8186797879223272000&xs=1&url=https%3A%2F%2Fclassroommagazines.scholastic.com%2Fsupport%2Flearnathome.html&sref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.livescience.com%2Fcoronavirus-kids-activities.html
- >>Crash Course <https://thecrashcourse.com/>
- >>200 Free Kid Educational Resources: Video Lessons, Apps, Books, Websites & More
http://www.openculture.com/free_k-12_educational_resources
- >>PBS Nova Labs <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/labs/>
- >>Live Science experiments <https://www.livescience.com/43560-plant-science-for-kids.html>

For more, see

- >Activities and online resources for homebound kids: A coronavirus guide
<https://www.livescience.com/coronavirus-kids-activities.html>
- >Online, home-school resources for parents during coronavirus closures
<https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-education/2020/03/19/resources-parents-during-coronavirus-closures/5062649002/>
- >Simple activities for children and adolescents when going outside is restricted
<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/simple-activities-children-and-adolescents>

*Resources for Home Study Topics Related to MH Topics – Over the school year, our Center resources are used by university students, middle and high school students and others who are doing projects related to mental health topics. So we thought we might mention that our online clearinghouse Quick Finds may be helpful as student pursue their learning from home. See the dropdown menu at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm>

(3) Things to Do As a Family Without Technology

Nature walks (chatting, collecting rocks and leaves, looking for bugs)
Board Games
Inventing Our Own Games
Puppet Shows
Making up skits
Active Games (e.g., Frisbee, lawn darts, croquet, basketball in the drive way, Four Square, Hopscotch ,running through obstacle courses the kids set up, touch football)
Playing an instrument, singing
Arts & crafts projects
Putting on a play
Journal/diary writing
Outdoor water play
Indoor Hide and Seek
Bird Watching
Build a birdhouse or birdfeeder
Cooking meals together
Jigsaw puzzles
Taking a walk
Establish an exercise routine

Picnicking
Bike riding
Doing volunteer work (e.g., raking an older neighbour's leaves)
Caring for a pet
Playing board and card games
Looking through old family albums together
Taking fun family photos and videos
Baking cookies together
Make chalk pictures on the sidewalk.
Making pizza from scratch
Trying new food
Building a snow or leaf fort
Playing games such as 20 questions, Simon Says, Charades
Doing a Treasure Hunt
Plant some seeds or a tree
Organize your house, room, junk
Throw out old stuff
Clean house
Phone friends/relatives
Read (books, magazines, graphic novels, etc)

For more, do an internet search for **at home activities for kids**.

And remember it's not about just doing for kids; it's about doing with kids; learning with kids; learning from kids; and kids learning from each other.

In addressing kids' stress, this is a good time to

(a) promote youth participation and decision making (see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/voice.pdf>)

and

(b) promote social-emotional development (see CASEL's informational video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2d0da6BZWA>
(Spanish version at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xz_aCbDI9uk&t=4s)

What's wrong?



There's nothing to do!

From: *You Are Not Your Child's Teacher*

You are their parent. You don't need to panic about educating your child during quarantine.
<https://slate.com/human-interest/2020/03/you-are-not-your-childs-teacher-quarantine-education.html>

Amidst the chaos of schools and offices closing, spring break cancellations, and frantic grocery hoarding, parents now feel that they must take on the full weight of their child's education. On the Slate Parenting Facebook group, parents bemoan their inability to teach math, worry about their children falling behind, and throw up their hands at the idea of working a full-time job and somehow educating their kids. You might feel the same way. You might be thinking, right now, How on earth am I supposed to be my child's teacher, on top of everything else?

Take a deep breath. Now, say this out loud: "I am not my child's teacher. I am their parent."

You have not suddenly become a home-school teacher overnight. Unless you were already home-schooling your child, as I do, the responsibility of reading, writing, and arithmetic still lies with their school. While teachers and school systems are working on ways to best meet standards in this new, uncharted world of large-scale virtual learning, parents can calm themselves.

You do not need to run out and purchase a home-school curriculum. You do not need to watch YouTube videos on teaching seventh grade Common Core math. You do not need to cram every hour of your child's day with educational advancement. Your primary focus should be where it always has been: on the well-being of your child.

Children thrive on routine and right now, all of that is gone. As a parent, you can provide a framework that keeps their brains active, as you likely already do in the summer. Academic achievement and testing benchmarks are a construct, constantly adjusted to fit educational philosophies. Don't worry about them right now. Worry about supporting your children as they process what is happening in the world.

The entire world is standing still. Your child is not falling behind. When school starts again on the other side of quarantine-in May or in September or whenever-every teacher will remember, and take into account, that nearly every child in the world experienced the same learning hiatus. Kids will still get into college; they'll still learn long division and the difference between the executive and the legislative branch; they'll still learn to read, write, and think, even if they do nothing with this time but binge Netflix and snuggle with you when your work is done

The greater risk to our children, and ourselves, is the stress we are adding to all our lives by believing that parents have to take on the full weight of education. The lesson to be learned from home-schoolers (and teachers) is that what kids need goes far beyond classroom instructional time. A typical homeschool schedule for elementary school kids only has about two to three hours a day. The balance of each day is filled with exploration, reading, household tasks, and learning to manage boredom. Your child's school schedule is much the same. Hours of their day are spent not on memorizing facts and learning new concepts, but on social interaction, games, and daily classroom tasks.

Once you have relieved yourself of the burden of educating your children, you can shift your focus to teaching them how to cope with the unexpected. This is a time to lean in to your children, providing them with extra love and support. Spend the time you would have been commuting cooking together. Spend your lunch break eating as a family and read together afterward. Start game night traditions if your evening sports are canceled. Agree to a family walk once a day, before work requires your online presence. Your children are going to remember how they felt during the COVID-19 outbreak, not what they missed in math class.

Instead of fighting with your children about their schoolwork, focus on surviving and thriving as a family unit. This may mean shifting your kids' schedules so that their time with you is on the weekend, and weekdays are full of TVs and tablets. That is OK. It may mean that you are happiest with an intricate schedule packed with all the resources schools, libraries, and publishers are providing. It may also mean that, like me, you are wearing noise-canceling headphones, sitting on the floor of the playroom, working on your laptop while the children run amok. These scenarios, and everything in between, should be considered perfect parenting. If your children feel supported and loved, and if everyone is going to bed mostly happy, make yourself a tinfoil star and put it on your computer right now. (Or, if you hate crafts, eat an Oreo.) You are winning.

I can't promise you that everything is going to be OK. But I can promise you that if your child learns nothing during this pandemic but how to deal with the unexpected and how to care for themselves amid chaos, they will have learned more than any book could teach them. You are not your child's teacher, but you are the parent. Take a deep breath

From: *Educating The Whole Child At Home During Quarantine: Helping kids cope with anxiety and learn from life-Diary of a Teacher During the Coronavirus Crisis*

<https://iameducator.com/2020/03/18/educating-the-whole-child-at-home-during-quarantine-helping-kids-cope-with-anxiety-and-learn-from-life-diary-of-a-teacher-during-the-coronavirus-crisis-ent>

As the coronavirus news continues to worsen, I am determined to build a positive space at home to help my two kids understand what is happening in our world-in an age appropriate way-and contribute what I can to the struggle to uplift the most vulnerable people during this crisis...

I know even for myself, there have been moments over the last few days where I have felt it's easier to teach a class of 30 kids than to have my own two boys at home all day. Part of that, I know, is because of the difficult circumstances we are under.

My household is increasingly feeling the stress as the coronavirus crisis mounts around the world. My 7-year-old boy is especially anxious about not being able to see friends or his first grade class. And I am sure, as much as I have tried to hide it, both of my boys are picking up on my anxiety about the increasing restrictions to public life...

One thing I realized from our day is that the new homeschooling moment that many millions of us around the country have found ourselves in doesn't have to look like kids doing work packets. You can cover a lot of subjects-and kids can get a deep and meaningful education-by simply engaging them about these unprecedented times. If your kids are begging for worksheets and need that structure, by all means provide them for them. But for all the parents who are at home with their kids right now, please don't pressure yourself to make sure that your kids are keeping pace, day by day, with the regular curriculum they were getting at school. School districts should refrain from requiring the endless filling out of worksheets-because it could put students at risk for missing the deeper education that this moment affords....

As tough a time as it is right now, we can also make this into an opportunity to expand the definition and purpose of education. Now, more than ever, we need education to address the moment we are in as a society and we need education to be relevant to our children's lives. Taking the time to keep our kids connected to their friends and family is education. Having our kids express their creativity is education. Talking to our kids about good hygiene and how to stop the spread of coronavirus is education. Taking time away from standard school lessons to just relax and engage in film studies on the couch with the kids can be an important way unwind and manage stress. Investigating the distribution of wealth in America and showing kids how inequality is making coronavirus more dangerous to our communities is a deeply valuable education. And what I have discovered, most of all, is that taking the time to discuss our feelings with our kids is the best education we could possibly give to our children.