

# At Home Learning Ideas and Strategies for during COVID-19



As more families face social distancing, self-quarantine, and school and work closings as a result of COVID-19, it's possible to feel stressed—not only about health issues, but also with the reality of suddenly being at home for many days with the children. Be they energetic little ones or school age where you are now entrusted to support their educational learning.

Below are some activity ideas, educational app suggestions as well as tips on how to support a routine—especially after having just come out of school holidays where, for many of us, is a chance to let that day to day routine be more relaxed.

Hopefully this information will help you feel a little less stressed and a little more supported and prepared for this 11-week term!

## For Younger Children

### Start with a Toy Rotation

If you have a variety of toys, try a toy rotation. Pick a few toys to leave out for your child to play with and put the rest away out of sight. After a week or so, switch out the toys they've been using for the ones stored away, and boom, it feels like they have new toys!

We know their toys will only entertain for so long...and then boredom can set in. Boredom for infants and toddlers may not look the same as it does for us. Signs your little one is bored:

- Fussing or whining
- Struggling to focus or engage in play
- Becoming more aggressive

### Parent-Child Play Ideas

As you look for activities to do with your child, consider offering different types of play to meet their needs and keep the fun going. Independent play (when children play by themselves with you nearby) is also an important type of play—and parents shouldn't feel guilty about giving their babies and toddlers a chance to play on their own.

Here are some different ideas for play that you can try with your young child:

**Outside time:** Getting outside will probably be refreshing and a great change of scenery for all of you.

Though to maintain social distancing offsite playdates are a no-go. Avoid touching playground equipment. Instead, run, roll down hills, jump like kangaroos, or lie back and look at the clouds. Then wash hands thoroughly after returning home from any outdoor play.

For infants:

- Bring their stroller outside for a walk or a story (this can be classified as exercising)
- Lay a blanket on the grass for tummy time in the backyard
- Enjoy bubbles, listen to music and sing together, talk about what you see outside in your yard.

For toddlers:

- Play 'I spy' (keep it simple, "I spy something blue", "I spy something that moves").
- Collect rocks or leaves, then sort them by size, color, and shape.
- Kick, roll, or toss a ball back and forth.
- Dig in the dirt (don't forget buckets, bowls, measuring cups, spoons, gardening tools, whatever you have!).
- Play with sidewalk chalk: draw pictures, trace one another's outline, and more.
- Paint with water. Fill a cup with water and give your child a brush to "paint" the sidewalk, door, etc.
- Blow bubbles.
- Play "I'm going to catch you."
- Pretend to be the different animals you might see in your neighborhood: Birds, squirrels, rabbits, deer, etc.

Most play that happens inside the house can also happen outside, so if the weather allows, bring some blocks outside, read together outdoors, color, or paint a cardboard box in the yard.

**Physical Play:** Little ones need to move and work their bodies...and voices. They will need opportunities to be loud, run, climb, and jump. This may happen outside or inside. Here are some ideas:

- Turn on some music and have a dance party.
- Put couch cushions on the floor and crawl, walk, or jump from one to the next (don't touch the floor, it's hot lava!).
- Use a bedsheet as a parachute (open it wide and raise it up above your heads, then bring it down to the floor). For infants, raise and lower a light blanket over them while playing peek-a-boo.
- Build a fort with sheets, blankets, couch cushions, pillows, chairs, and more. You can even "camp-out" indoors!
- Create an obstacle course using furniture, pillows, and toys.

**Quiet Play:** Children (and you) will also need some quiet time each day. This is great for relaxing, recharging, and maybe even allowing you to get some work done.

- Read together or independently (toddlers can flip through books and talk about what they see in the illustrations)
- Coloring
- Puzzles
- Block building
- Sorting objects
- Pretend play with stuffed animals, dolls, trains, cars, or kitchen items for "playing house"
- Stickers on paper – you can draw large shapes, letters, or numbers on paper and your child can line the shape with stickers
- Tape on paper – you can cut short pieces of masking tape and your child can stick it to a piece of paper (sounds boring, but little ones love it).

Remember that one of the most favorite types of play for children is helping you with "real" work. Think about whether your toddler can help with meal preparation, setting the table, sorting or putting away laundry, cleaning up (for example, putting shoes in the closet) or putting new toilet paper rolls in a basket in the bathroom. These tasks may take a bit longer with our toddlers, but it's fun for them and also teaches the value of cooperation.

## For Older Children

**The Photo Stuff with Ruff** app is based on PBS KIDS' short-form animated digital series, "The Ruff Ruffman Show," and inspires **children ages four to eight** to discover what the "stuff" in their world is made of. In this camera-based experience, children learn about science by exploring surroundings and taking pictures of different materials to complete silly scenes. Play it together and record and share your observations in fun, creative ways! Developed by PBS KIDS, CPB, and WGBH with a 2015 ED/Ready to Learn award.

<https://pbskids.org/apps/photo-stuff-with-ruff.html>

**The Jet's Bot Builder** app is based on the PBS KIDS series, Ready Jet Go!, and allows **children ages five to eight** to create new parts, explore, learn and have fun building a robot with Jet and friends. Jet's Bot Builder adapts to your young learner's progress. Developed by PBS KIDS, CPB, and Wind Dancer Films with a 2015 ED/Ready to Learn award. <https://pbskids.org/apps/jets-bot-builder-.html>

*Note: The PBS Kids website includes more [apps](#) and [videos](#), all available at no cost.*

**MathBRIX (video demo)** is a game for **pre-K to grade two children** to think mathematically and problem-solve by moving virtual replicas of toy-building bricks into place to arrive at solutions. PlayPACT, the home companion, encourages parents to help children build early cognitive skills using a "connected play" approach. Developed with 2016 and 2019 NSF SBIR awards. <https://www.mathbrix.com>

**AlphaBear2** on [GooglePlay](#) and [itunes](#) ([Video Demo](#)) is an award winning English word-spelling game app for **players of all ages**, similar to Scrabble or Boggle, in which spellers of any age can learn new words and collect cute bears. Developed by Spry Fox with a 2017 ED/IES SBIR award.

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.spryfox.alphabear2&hl=en\\_US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.spryfox.alphabear2&hl=en_US)

**www.storylineonline.net** is a great site where books are read by actors. It also has great creative illustrations. A great way to explore new books while we cannot access the local library's hard copies.

**Educational website games** (these are not apps)

– [www.ABCYa.com](http://www.ABCYa.com)

This site has a HUGE range of educational games that cover all the grade levels. Including pre through to grade 6+. There is sure to be something here to entice any interest.

- [www.au.ixl.com](http://www.au.ixl.com)

This site has an array of educational games that focus on the areas of English and Maths and are broken down into year levels. It covers the whole age range- preschool all the way to Year 12. When you first go to the page you set your Country and therefore the ideas provided are relevant to our curriculum!

- [www.natgeokids.com/au](http://www.natgeokids.com/au)

This is the children friendly site of Natural Geographic- Australian version. Lots of things to explore, watch and learning games to play that are based on nature and animals.

### App Ideas

<https://www.tsc.nsw.edu.au/tscnews/ultimate-list-reading-and-literacy-apps-for-children>

This site comes recommended by Scots College in Sydney. It has road tested the 21 apps listed and gives a description of it's content and the age groups recommended. The topic areas covered are:

Reading Comprehension

Opposites

Sequencing

Phonics

Spelling

Vocabulary

Writing

Punctuation

Story making (including a comic builder option)

## Thinking About Your Daily Routine

Where possible, it's important to try to keep, or develop, daily routines. Creating a structure, which our kids are used to during the school day. Set blocks of time for learning, as well as breaks (remember at school there are breaks through the school days) and this helps to create some stability into their day and week during this new and very different time for all.

This will also then help support that transition back to school when we can return to onsite learning. Below is one suggestion that can help to get you started.

# COVID-19 DAILY SCHEDULE

© Jessica McHale Photography

Before 9:00am	Wake up	Eat breakfast, make your bed, get dressed, put PJ's in laundry
9:00-10:00	Morning walk	Family walk with the dog Yoga if it's raining
10:00-11:00	Academic time	NO ELECTRONICS Sudoku books, flash cards, study guide, Journal
11:00-12:00	Creative time	Legos, magnatiles, drawing, crafting, play music, cook or bake, etc
12:00	Lunch	
12:30PM	Chore time	A - wipe all kitchen table and chairs. B - wipe all door handles, light switches, and desk tops. C - Wipe both bathrooms - sinks and toilets
1:00-2:30	Quiet time	Reading, puzzles, nap
2:30-4:00	Academic time	ELECTRONICS OK Ipad games, Prodigy, Educational show
4:00-5:00	Afternoon fresh air	Bikes, Walk the dog, play outside
5:00-6:00	Dinner	
6:00-8:00	Free TV time	Kid showers x3
8:00	Bedtime	All kids
9:00PM	Bedtime	All kids who follow the daily schedule & don't fight

Each school has taken a slightly different approach to what work and the expectation of how much work to do each day. Don't be hard on yourself. If it's not doable for your family- it's not doable. The above suggested schedule won't cover the number of hours that I'm hearing some of you have been encouraged to do. This is a challenging time for our children, and now that school holidays are over a very new challenge arises. Home is often where, for many children, it has been their 'safe zone'. The place where they can be themselves and have some time out. Now, suddenly, they are being expected to experience 'school' in this space. It's going to be real hard for some. But don't despair. Many of the ideas above are still practicing thinking, problem solving, maths, reading, and even writing can be incorporated – just in different ways.