

# What you can do during your child's time off school

What we all need to remember is that right now all children need to feel comforted and loved. These are unprecedented times, and everyone can feel anxious about the uncertainties of this situation. Some children may think that the idea of being off school/preschool sounds OK, but the reality of being at home for prolonged periods of time and not seeing their friends will be very hard for all of us.

Don't worry about academic progress at this point or ages and stages. All our children are in the same boat and when we do get back into settings, practitioners will be able to address their needs from wherever they are. Children's mental health is going to be more important than academic skills. How they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did.

For all families, focusing on relationships is going to be important. Getting a balance between encouraging productive activities and battling with children to do more formal learning is going to be tricky. Arguing with your child about doing this is not going to be productive. It is often much harder for parents and carers to teach their own children, so do what you can. Lots of activities are so worthwhile; read stories, make dens, watch TV together, play in the garden, do puzzles, look after pets and simply try and spend quality time with your children. Remember that this is likely to be a marathon and not a sprint so feeling safe and positive relationships are most important.

Over the coming weeks you may see an increase in emotional distress and behaviours that come with this. You might see anger, anxiety or protests that they can't do things they would normally do. This is normal and to be expected under these circumstances and adults will also be experiencing a range of emotions.

To support children; make a plan, have routines, but be flexible and do what you can in your own circumstances.

This pack has some ideas for activities and experiences as well as resources for supporting learning at home. This is to support you and help keep your child's mind working and active.

## **Making a plan**

It's important for children to have some structure and routine. It's good for physical and mental health and helps avoid boredom!

Make your plan achievable and flexible.

Think about what **your child** needs.

Don't plan for too much and remember that it's OK to change things.

- Try and have a morning routine - breakfast, getting dressed and washing etc, activities, then an afternoon routine. You could think about hourly slots. But bear in mind little people get bored quite quickly and need variety.

- Think about your home space and resources – where is it best to do what?

Learning does not have to mean sat at a table. Read a book on the sofa, plan for an outdoor picnic, lay on the floor and do some mark making

- Make a timetable or daily plan and pin it up so it's visual.
- Keep it simple and add suggested times.
- Make sure there are some choices.
- Include some treats in the day.
- Headphones for music can help keep distractions down.
- Include some physical exercise
- Include some non-screen time activities.
- Try and include some outside time e.g. garden or a walk.
- Include downtime and relaxing.
- Making lunch or snacks together or for each other could be part of the plan.
- How might you use ICT?
- Jot down ideas on your phone or in a notebook if you see good activities you could include.
- Use online sites to get ideas.
- Think about household chores that could be part of the plan.
- Do you have hobbies or interests you can share with your family?
- Board games and card games can be planned in
- Can you include some projects?
- Can you include online social contact- e.g. facetime friends or family?
- Stick to bedtime routines
- You know your child and if they need more structure or more flexibility.

Don't worry if you don't stick to the plan – every child is different. We are in stressful times. Some days may be easier. Choose your battles. Look after yourself.

Reading a story. Reading together.	Construction- Lego, Knex, bricks	Sand pit	Water play- plastic trays, containers, washing up bowls	Finger painting Handprints
Make dens using sheets and blankets	Watch films together	Pasta shape painting and collage	'Paint' in the garden with water	Measure things with a rule or tape or hands or feet
Play board games	Puzzles	Play shops	Play cafes	Make a house with a cardboard box
Make obstacle course	Trampoline	Make puppets out of socks	Scrapbooks	Make collages out of old magazines
Look at photos of animals, places etc	Look after pet and do a project about it	Simple cooking, sandwich making.	Baking	Make your own play dough-salt dough
Make musical instruments with containers and rice etc	Make a show	Dance to music	Do a workout	Play card games
Make up a quiz and send it to friends by email	Treasure hunt- e.g. in the house and garden find 10 items to go in a matchbox.	Word games - I spy, 20 questions, alphabet memory games	I-pad games/ tablet games	Make your own board game
Do origami and send photos to friends	Colouring	Birdwatch in the garden and learn to identify birds	Take photos of nature	Write a diary
Make a recipe book	Do a chore in the house	Child led project about an interest	Audible books/ story tapes	Learn to draw Make cartoons
Research a country	Make a quiz for the family online.	Older children deliver a lesson to younger children- could do online.	Learn some key words in another language e.g. Duolingo website	Practice a musical instrument-use YouTube to learn.
Find a virtual tour of a museum or zoo	Google virtual tours	Webcams of volcanoes etc	Have fun doing hairstyles	Create outfits and do a fashion show

Take photos of things close up - challenge people to guess	Junk modelling	Papier Mache	Ready steady cook challenge- What can be made?	Press flowers collect leaves.
Make pretend potions in the garden.	Science experiments- float or sink in the washing up bowl or bath.	Make decorations like paper chains, pom poms, paper bunting.	Make a video to share with the family	Write stories or make a comic book
Make a joke book	Paint on pebbles	Karaoke. Find lyrics on google	Chalk drawing on the patio/doorstep.	Sewing activities. Learn to knit or crochet.
Grow cress seeds or grow an apple pip etc	Sketch in the garden or items in the house.	Create a playlist	Listen to podcasts	Relaxation exercises
Learn a new word a day	Watch a nature programme	Make up a 'Strictly' routine	Design a dream island/theme park on plain paper	Make shadow puppets using hands and a lamp on the wall
Paper plate crafts- make faces, decorate	Make jewellery from pasta shapes or rolled newspaper tubes	Doodle/ scribble and make pictures from the doodle	Make paper planes and see who's can fly the furthest	Indoor games – e.g. bowling alley out of plastic bottles, indoor cricket with a wooden spoon.
Tea party for toys	Hide and seek/ Simon says	Make a picnic and have it indoors or in garden	Create a time capsule with messages, pictures etc	Write letters or cards
Fact learning challenges- counties of the UK, capital cities, Kings and Queens	Make your own word searches	Learn magic tricks	Learn the alphabet in sign language	Play charades with movie/book/TV titles. Play Pictionary on scrap paper

If children (or adults) are feeling stressed or anxious physical and sensory activities or simply getting outside can help get rid of some of the hormones in your body that cause these feelings. Try some of these ideas.

## Ideas for physical activities indoors

Indoor obstacle course – use cushions, tables, chairs etc	Star jumps	Push ups, sit ups – who can do most?
Balloon football	Balloon keepy uppy	Bubble popping
Walk like an animal – slither like a snake, hop like a frog etc	Simon says	Follow my leader
Balance beam – lay a piece of string/wool along the floor can you walk and balance along it	Musical bumps	Musical statues
Paper aeroplane races	Target practice – use a bean bag/small soft toy to throw into laundry basket, waste paper bin etc	Pillow walk – lay pillows/cushions on the floor as stepping stones to walk on
Up and over – adult to make a bridge with their body for children to crawl over and then lay down children to climb over	Commando crawl under a duvet on the floor	Yoga
Action songs party	Teddy blanket toss – each hold the ends of a blanket/sheet/towel and place a small teddy on top. See how high you can make the teddy go and see if you can catch him	Hide and seek
Up and down game – child holds an object when the adult says something that is found high up they hold the object high. For something found low they hold it down to the ground	Hopscotch made with tape or wool	Stair step ups. How many can you do?

## Ideas for activities in the garden or outdoors

Make and fly a kite	Puddle jumping	Kicking and catching games with balls
Jump the waves – tie a length of rope to something, jiggle it to make waves for children to jump over	Helicopter – adult to spin round holding a rope at floor level for children to jump over	Treasure hunt walk – create a list of things for children to see on the walk
Long jump	Colour run – colour 4 different areas, with chalk or a coloured item. Call out a colour and children have to run to that area	Limbo – balance the handle of a mop/brush between two chairs and limbo under
Hopscotch	Ladders – draw ladders on the floor and children to jump on or between the rungs	Make a den in the garden
Have a garden picnic	Ride a bike or scooter	Do some digging in the garden
Look at the stars at night	Go on a bug hunt	What can you see in the clouds?
Make a bug house	Plant seeds or an apple pip	Walk a mile a day
Load pokemon go on your phone and go pokemon catching	Make mud pies	Have car races with your cars
Hula hoops	Skipping ropes and challenges	Make a laundry tent with your washing line
Spider web hunt	Alphabet walk – what can you find beginning with each letter of the alphabet	Trampolines
Outdoor painting with buckets of water and big brushes	Chalk pictures	Art with nature – make a picture with what you find in your garden

## **Ideas for sensory activities**

1. Anything with water – colour it, add bubbles, warm and cold, add glitter
2. Make playdough
3. Shaving foam pictures
4. Blanket monsters – cover yourself with a blanket and make a monster shape while underneath it
5. Feely bags or buckets
6. Ice cube play
7. Cooked and dry pasta to explore
8. Carry a rucksack on a walk
9. Sensory bucket – feel a container with a range of things with different textures such as a sponge, towel. Hairbrush, foil to crinkle etc
10. Hand massage
11. Brush each others hair
12. Any activity that includes rocking – rocking from foot to foot, picking up a child and rocking, on a swing etc
13. Wheelbarrow walking – child puts hands on floor, adult lifts legs and holds them as a wheelbarrow
14. Listen to the rain
15. Play some relaxing music
16. Go marching and have a good stomp about
17. Suck a milkshake through a straw
18. Crunch some cereal
19. Wrap in a duvet
20. Turn off the lights and close the curtains – make a dark space

## **Something to challenge you.....**

1. Can you build a bridge out of spaghetti?
2. Can you build a boat that floats?
3. Can you make a coat for your favourite teddy?
4. How long can you stand on one leg? Can you get better each day?
5. Can you put a different picture in your window each day?
6. How many things can you see that are different colours from your window?
7. How quickly can you get dressed? Have a timer on the phone going.
8. How quickly can you put your pjs on?
9. How many nursery rhymes do you know? Can you sing them all?
10. Can you make up and tell a story with your toys?
11. How many hops can you do in one minute?
12. How many things can you hold in your hands at one time without dropping them?
13. How many times can you throw and catch a ball on your own and to another person?

14. In 5 minutes how many things can you collect in your house that is a particular colour?
15. How long can I keep a chocolate button on my tongue without eating it?
16. In 5 minutes how many different things can I hear?
17. Try a new food you haven't tried before.
18. Can you make up new words to an old song?
19. How many steps can you take by pretending to be a crab?
20. How many of the things in this pack have you tried?