

Ideas for keeping children busy

Routine

It's important to keep the children in a similar routine to normal. Up and dressed as usual and have clearly defined mealtimes and tidying up times. They are all well able to tidy up for themselves so don't let them pretend otherwise! A little bit of planning on your part will help keep everyone sane. Decide the night before what you will do the following day and allow the children to give their input on activities, no point planning something they won't be interested in, give them small choices to make, this game or this game? Blue paint or red paint? For example:

- Breakfast
- Messy play
- snack
- jigsaws and board games
- lunch
- art
- outside for fresh air
- snack
- read stories
- free play with toys
- dinner
- stories
- bed

Doesn't have to be very strict, just an idea in your own head, once you break the day into small chunks of time it becomes more manageable rather than seeing 12 hours stretched out in front of you

Online

The Dad Lab on Facebook/YouTube has loads of fun and simple science-based activities that can be done with common household materials.

Fitness for Kids on Facebook/Instagram will be posting easy workout activities for children each day to keep them active

The Imagination Tree website with lots of creative activities for children

Learning4kids.net another website with lots of fun educational activities for children

Messy Play (recipes at end of document)

Make your own playdough, children will enjoy making it and then play with it afterwards

Make Gloop and get messy (might want to do this in the garden)

Make cloud dough (it's like kinetic sand)

Water play – fill a large container with water, maybe add a drop or two of food colouring give small jugs, containers, spoons, sieves, funnels, whatever you have lying around and leave them to it (might be another one for the garden)

Practical Life

If you have stocked up on pasta, rice or lentils give the children a small amount to work with

Two small bowls let them spoon it back and forth between the bowls

Two small jugs they or pour it back and forth

If they spill get them to tidy it up themselves!

You could fill a large container with rice and hide small toys for them to dig up or give them different spoons and containers to just explore the rice with, you'd be surprised how long this will keep them busy, especially the younger children.

Pegging clothes – give them some clothes pegs and small scraps of cloth/dolls clothes and let them peg them on the side of a basket or washing line

Cleaning - put some water in a spray bottle give them a cloth and let them 'clean the windows/tables' supervision might be required here!

Sorting – gather a selection of small objects (Lego blocks, crayons, toy cars, buttons etc) and have the children sort them, could be by colour, type, hard/soft etc

Threading – shoelace or pipe cleaner and beads/buttons thread the objects on can make patterns etc

Art

There are loads of art ideas online just search arts and crafts for pre-schoolers and you'll get more ideas than you'll have time to do. You can also find and print out colouring pages for anything they might be interested in film/tv characters, animals, space, dinosaurs etc

Painting (a couple of ideas)

- Put paint into Ziploc bags tape them to be extra sure they are closed and tape them to a table let the child squish the bags to move the paint around mess free!
- put a piece of paper in the bottom of a shallow container pour in some paint, one or two primary colours then put in a couple of marbles/small balls and let the child tilt the container to move the balls through the paint to make a design

colouring, stamping, chalk, collage

gluing – cut up small scraps or card/paper (can be greeting cards, food boxes, boxes toys came in etc) and give them a piece of card (again can be a food box cut up) and some pva glue or pritt stick and let them create.

Remember it doesn't matter what it looks like in the end it's the process of creating that is important for the children.

Music

Put on their favourite songs and have a dance party.

Action songs head shoulders, incy wincy, etc get faster each time

Musical statues/bumps/chairs

Make instruments – pots and wooden spoons (this is for when you're really running out of ideas!)

Stories

Read books

Listen to books on tape/cd

Watch stories being read on YouTube

Act out stories, get props (eg teddy bears, bowls, chairs, beds for goldilocks)

Use puppets

Make up your own stories, write them down and make your own books let the children draw the pictures

Play library

Toys

Try to rotate what they can play with. At night go through their toys and take some away then put out different toys each day, the novelty will spark interest they may not have if they see it all the time, also too much choice can be overwhelming and they'll tell you they have nothing to do! Play with the toys with them.

Jigsaws

Board games

Building blocks/Lego

Dressing up

Dolls house

Take the opportunity to have a clear out, let the children help you choose what they do not play with anymore – might be tricky 😊

Other

Baking

Cooking - let them help make dinner, with supervision they are well able to chop, peel or grate

Photos – take photos, let them take photos, print them out (just on printer paper) and make collages. Look at old photos together, children love looking at themselves, show them photos of you as a child and talk about what you did when you were younger.

Have a movie day – turn your sitting room into a cinema, close the curtains, make popcorn get some treats and snuggle up on the couch (not too close!) and put on their favourite film.

Scavenger hunt/nature walk – get out for fresh air but stay away from other people by making your own scavenger hunt. On a piece of paper jot down objects to find, (a little drawing will help them to ‘read’ it themselves) and give them a pen to tick them off once found. You could look for a blue door, a red car, yellow flowers, a basketball net, a dog. Think about what is in your own neighbourhood, are the neighbours getting an extension? you could add a skip to the list, is there a caravan in someone’s driveway? Has someone got a garden gnome obsession? For older children you could add numbers and letters to the list. You would be surprised how many letters you can find when you go looking for them, road signs, drain covers, cars, houses, posters etc

TV – of course there is no harm in letting them watch a little bit of television too. Once it’s not morning til night for the two weeks they’ll be fine.

This is not an exhaustive list, just the first things that came to mind, I’m sure you all have plenty of ideas of your own to keep your children occupied, you know them best. You don’t need to do all or any of the things on the list they are just some suggestions. There are millions of ideas on the internet that you can find.

Good luck to us all, and here’s hoping things get back to normal sooner rather than later.

MESSY PLAY RECIPES

Best ever no cook playdough recipe (The Imagination Tree)

- 2 cups plain flour
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil (baby oil and coconut oil work too)
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
- 1 to 1.5 cups boiling water (adding in increments until it feels just right)
- Food colouring (optional)
- few drops glycerine (my secret ingredient for stretch and shine!)

Method:

- Mix the flour, salt, cream of tartar and oil in a large mixing bowl
- Add food colouring TO the boiling water then into the dry ingredients
- Stir continuously until it becomes a sticky, combined dough
- Add the glycerine (optional)
- Allow it to cool down then take it out of the bowl and knead it vigorously for a couple of minutes until all the stickiness has gone. * This is the most important part of the process, so keep at it until it's the perfect consistency
- If it remains a little sticky, then add a touch more flour until just right

Here's a video of how it's done:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMw41MyD0Sk#action=share>

OR

Playdough Recipe

1 cup of salt

2 cups of flour

2 tablespoons of oil

4 teaspoons of cream of tartar

1 cup of water

Few drops of food colouring

Mix dry ingredients with water in microwave safe bowl

Mix oil and food colouring together in a cup then add more water until there is a cup of liquid in total

Add wet ingredients to the dry ingredients

Place the bowl into the microwave for 90 seconds then take it out and stir, repeat 5 or 6 times until the playdough is the desired texture

Gloop (Learning4kids)

2 cups of cornflour

1 cup of water

Food Colouring

A large container or bowl

- Place the cornflour into a large container and place a few drops of colouring into the centre. Have the water ready for your child to pour into the container.
- Mix the water into the cornflour and colouring. It will take some time to mix together but encourage your child to play with the gloop before it is mixed. What does it feel like?

Understanding Gloop – What is happening?

Solid or Liquid: Cornflour is made of lots of long, stringy particles. When water is added they do not dissolve in water, but they do spread themselves out. This allows the gloop to act both like a solid and a liquid. When you roll the mixture in your hands or apply pressure to it, the particles join together, and the mixture feels solid. But if it is left to rest or is held up and allowed to dribble, the particles slide over each other and it feels like a liquid.

Get messy and have fun while learning!!

Cloud Dough (Tinker Lab)

- 4 cups flour
- 1/2 cup oil – can use baby oil for nicer smell but cooking oil works fine

Cloud Dough Steps

1. Pour the flour into the centre of a large tub.
2. Create a crater in the middle of the flour.
3. Pour the oil into the crater.
4. Gently mix it all together.
5. Enjoy mixing and learning about the properties of the dough as it is, or add small silicone bowls, spoons, or measuring cups to make small structures, hills, or pretend cupcakes.

Here's a video of how it's done:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5QwSf3ND_g#action=share

