



Keep the children learning at home during lockdown

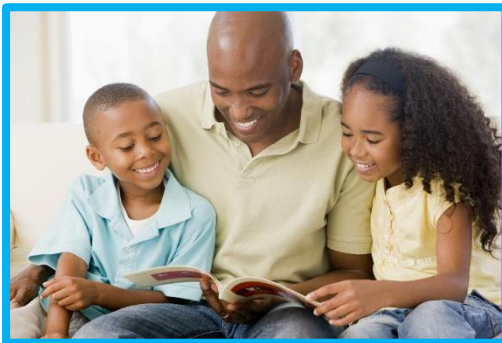
Not all learning happens in school. It has always been that way. While teachers are responsible for children's learning of curricula, parents have always been their children's first and most important teachers.

Parents, you've got this.

I hope that, from these suggestions, you can see how easy it is to incorporate learning into your everyday activities. Learning can take place in any situation when you enrich it with discussion and explanations. Learning at home adds meaning to learning in school. With a little thought you can find opportunities to transfer the learning in work set by teachers to activities you engage in at home.

Please keep in mind, as you read the lists, that the amount of support given, or independence allowed, in each activity will need to be adjusted to the individual child's age and ability. Even young children who are not yet reading independently can be included in most activities.

The most valuable things — read, talk, play

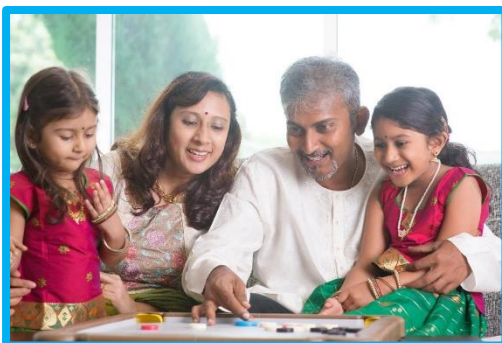


The most valuable things you can still do for your children is spend time with them, talk with them, read to and with them, and play with them. And give them time to read and play independently.

None of us are used to being locked up together all day for weeks on end with nowhere to go and it is more difficult when you have work to do, but try to establish a rhythm and routine that suits your family.

Try to not stress over tasks that are set by teachers. This is new for the teachers too and they are doing their best for you in these changing circumstances. Complete what is manageable and put the rest aside for another time. There are many avenues to learning that don't involve worksheets.

If you continue to read to and with your children daily, play games with them and involve them in everyday activities with clear explanations that engage them in the procedures, you will be doing a lot to progress their learning.



Play board games

Bring out your store of board games that may be collecting dust in the cupboard. Children learn many skills from playing board games. As well as the social skills of turn taking, following rules, and accepting wins and losses graciously, many games involve reading, mathematical calculations and problem solving. If you don't have a cupboard full of games, there are plenty of [readilearn games](https://www.readilearn.com.au/games) you can download to print and play.

Food preparation including cooking



One of the best activities to foster learning at home is involving children in planning for meals, choosing the menu, preparing the food and cleaning up.

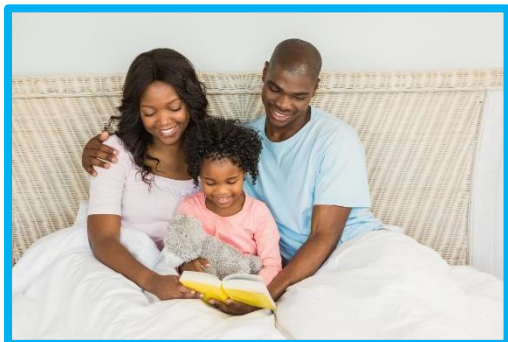
Food preparation is not only a valuable life skill, it involves learning in almost every area of the curriculum.

- Reading — read the recipes for ingredients and method, read product labels
- Vocabulary development — list all the words that are required for cooking; for example, mix, stir, sift, fold, blend, boil, bake, roast, fry ...
- Writing — write a shopping list, or list of ingredients to take from the pantry or refrigerator, write a menu or invitations to the family (how lovely to receive a special invitation slipped under the door)
- Maths — count and measure quantities, count and sort utensils and dinner dishes and cutlery, share quantities, read and measure time for cooking or preparation
- Science — observe changes that occur as you mix ingredients or when heat is added or removed
- HASS — learn about the recipes that have been handed down through your family and about recipes that have originated in other countries or traditions
- Music — listen to music as you engage in food preparation, including music from the countries of food you are preparing
- Art — decorate menus and special invitations, photograph dishes made and keep a record of them in a book alongside their recipes

In readilearn [cooking resources](#) you will find the recipe for a [crater of the moon cake](#) and some suggestions for associated [science learning](#). With a little imagination and lots of discussion, any kitchen activity can stimulate a lot of learning.



Read! Read! Read!



Make the most of every reading opportunity that occurs throughout the day.

- *Read to and with your child every day – continue the practice already established with special sharing times during the day or at bed-time — or both!*
- *Demonstrate that you value reading by making time for your own reading, or setting aside a special quiet time when everyone in the family reads.*
- *Read poetry books, song books, picture books, joke and riddle books, crossword books, information books, chapter books (these can be read **to** younger children, or **with** older children – taking turns to read a page or a chapter each).*
- *Just because libraries and books stores are closed, it doesn't mean you can't access new material to read. Many libraries can be accessed, and books borrowed to download and read. Online bookstores are still open, and you can purchase ebooks to download or order hard copies to be delivered. Many small bookstores are accepting online orders and delivering to their local areas. What a great way of supporting your local independent bookstores. Audiobooks are also easily accessible online, and many are suitable for listening to as a family.*

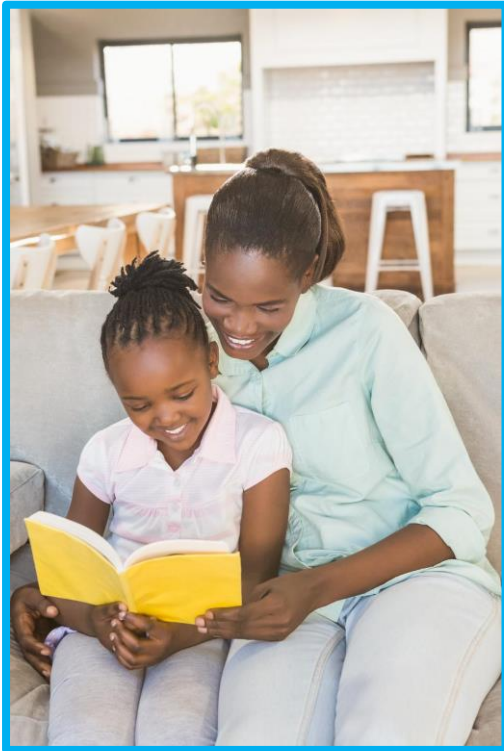


- *Provide your children with bookstore catalogues and encourage them to read book descriptions to guide their next selection.*
- *Provide plenty of time for your children to read independently for recreation or other purposes of their own.*
- *Invite your children to assist in meal planning by choosing and reading recipes.*
- *Suggest your children read the TV guide to find when favourite programs are showing and establish a timetable for viewing, rather than haphazard watching with random flicking through channels.*
- *Bestow upon your children the title of 'Family weather watchers' and have them consult weather forecasts in the newspaper or online to keep the family up to date.*
- *Engage your children in craft activities which require them to follow written instructions. The ability to understand and follow procedures is empowering and requires the ability to read written, as well as visual, instructions.*



- *Encourage your children to ask questions about every day events and phenomena. Help them to research in books or on the internet.*
- *Read maps to locate places where other family members live, or places that are learned about in school.*

Listening to your children read



When listening to your children read, it is easy to fall into the role of tester, checking to see that every word is read correctly and pointing out errors that are made. This often means that you are watching for errors rather than listening for meaning and enjoyment.

My suggestion is that you step back from that role and simply listen to enjoy the story or text. Respond to it with interest just as you would when sharing a story with them.

If they say something that doesn't make sense, comment on it. Say, oh, that doesn't sound right. Are you sure that's what it says?

If they are unable to correct the error, simply tell them what it is or, if you think they should recognise it or be able to work it out, help them to do so.

You want their reading experiences to be enjoyable and meaningful.

If you find they are making a lot of errors (more than one in ten words), then the book is probably too difficult for them to read independently. Instead of telling that it's too hard, simply join in, reading together. Listening to you read as they read too, will help them develop fluency and they will learn to recognise the words as they see and hear them at the same time.

Before your child begins to read, it is a good idea to look through the book together, discussing what is happening and scanning the pages for words that you think the child may find difficult. If you see any words that you think may be unfamiliar to them, add these to your discussion so the child is more prepared for them when they encounter them in the text.



You can find additional suggestions of how to respond to your children when they are reading to you in the brochure [Help your child with reading](#).

Write! Write! Write!



Provide children with a selection of paper on which to write, for example:

- loose paper in all sizes and colours, adhesive notepaper, letter writing paper, cards and postcards
- plain paper, lined paper and patterned paper
- bound paper in notebooks, exercise books, diaries and lockable 'secret' journals
- envelopes and stamps
- tablets and computers with word processing and drawing software

and different tools for writing, for example:

- lead pencils, coloured pencils, fine pencils, thick pencils
- jumbo crayons, fine crayons, wind-up crayons
- charcoal
- felt-tipped pens (thick and thin tips), black, silver, gold, pastel and bright shades
- paints
- tablets and computers with word processing and drawing software

Provide time for writing every day.



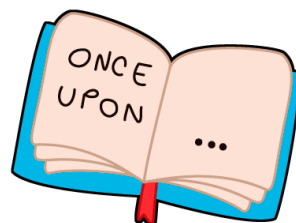
If you are able to, it is a good idea to make a family time for writing when everyone writes. Setting aside time to write alongside your children and sharing the enjoyment of each other's creativity will do much to encourage a real love of writing; for yourself, maybe, as well as for your child.

If you write as part of your work, perhaps your children could sit alongside you and write when you are writing.

When responding to children's writing, it is always important to respond to the message first, rather than the spelling, punctuation or handwriting. The idea is to encourage a love of writing; not to discourage it through negative attention to details which will improve with practice – and reading!

Just as writing is a great way of improving reading, reading is a great way to develop writing skills through exposure to correct use of grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as the richness of language!

The trick is to not make writing an onerous task that must be endured, but one that gives pleasure for its own sake e.g. stories and poems; or for a purpose e.g. writing a shopping list or things to remember; thank you letters for gifts received, or letters to loved ones whom they are unable to visit with during these changed circumstances.



The possibilities for writing opportunities are limited only by your imagination!



- Use adhesive notepaper to write messages to your children. Encourage them to write messages back.
- Encourage children to write letters or emails, cards or postcards to grandparents, aunties, uncles and friends.
- Demonstrate that you value writing by making time for your own writing, e.g. keeping a diary, writing letters and cards to family or friends, writing a shopping list.

- Display a message board prominently in the home and list important events, reminders and messages. Encourage your children to add their own messages to the board.



- Provide a calendar or diary and ask your children to note family birthdays, holidays and events for future reference.
- Children could write a list of things they are looking forward to doing when the lockdown is over. They might like to list them order of preference.

- Encourage your children to keep a diary in which important events and feelings are noted. The event which we are currently experiencing is (hopefully) a once-in-a-lifetime event. If they keep a diary of their experiences and responses, they will have something to share with their grandchildren in years to come.



- Play word games e.g. Scrabble and other crossword games; Boggle or 'hangman'. (If you don't like the connotation of 'hangman', give each player ten counters to start with. Each time an incorrect guess is made, they give away a counter. If all counters are used, they forfeit the word.)

- Write poems and songs together.
- Encourage children to write and perform 'plays' for the family.
- Take photos of events during the day and use them to make a photo book. This can be done instantly on a computer with photos taken using a phone or tablet and emailed with accompanying text.

- *Insert photos from a phone, digital camera or tablet into a slideshow program such as PowerPoint, then add text to create a digital story or record. With one click these can be saved as an automatic show or MP4 video. You may make these about current events or use the time to catch up on making books about previous holidays and events.*
- *Involve children in planning the weekly meals by selecting recipes for a menu they write, and for which they create a shopping list of required ingredients.*
- *Write rebus messages to your children and ask them to write a rebus message back, e.g.*



- *Encourage your children to write the step-by-step instructions for making a craft item they have just designed, or to write down the rules for a game so that everybody is sure how to play.*
- *Suggest that your children write down questions they would like answered, and then write the information discovered during research (by interviewing or asking people, reading books or doing an internet search).*
- *Suggest to children that they make a storybook for a younger sibling or friend.*
- *Help children to set up and maintain a blog to create a record of activities and events to be shared with family and friends. The posts could be regular e.g. daily or weekly, or follow particular activities.*
- *Make the most of every writing opportunity that occurs throughout the day!*



Have fun with maths!



Maths can be fun. We use maths all day every day from when we open our eyes to see what the time is until we check the time before we turn out the light.

We are counting, sequencing, measuring and making space for things.

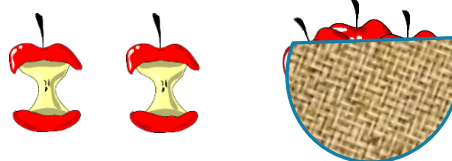
With a little imagination we can involve children in many opportunities for developing their prowess with maths during the day.

It can be fun and effective without a boring worksheet in sight.

I have already mentioned some of the benefits of cooking and food preparation. Here are some more suggestions.

Number and place value

- Count items e.g. birds in the sky, cookies baked on a tray, steps in a staircase, windows or doors in your house, spoons in the drawer, toys in the toy box . . .
- Count out the cutlery required for each person at dinner.
- Include your child in shopping activities using catalogues and brochures or a play shop set up at home. Help children to:
 - Recognise the coins and notes
 - Count the value of coins and notes
 - Predict whether they have enough money to purchase an item, and whether there will be change
 - Tender the money in payment for an item.
- When your child is sharing e.g. the biscuits, balloons or slices of fruit, ask them to:
 - Predict if there will be enough for everyone to have one, or more than one each
 - Share out the items, allocating the same number to each
 - Determine if there are any left over and what to do with them.
- Use terms like half and quarter correctly, e.g. when cutting apples, oranges, sandwiches, pizza, to indicate pieces of equal size.
- Play games that involve counting, e.g. counting the number of skips, balls in hoops, pins knocked down, or dice games like snakes and ladders that require adding as well as number recognition and counting.
- Make up number stories e.g. "We had five apples in the bowl. I ate one, and you ate one, how many are left?"



- Read books with number concepts e.g. Pat Hutchins's **The Doorbell Rang**, Eric Carle's **Rooster's Off to See the World** or Kim Michelle Toft's **One Less Fish**.

Patterns and algebra

- Use items to make patterns e.g. sort and create a pattern from building blocks or toy cars.



- Look for patterns in your home or in books e.g. tiles, quilts, curtains, clothing.
- Decorate cards and drawings with a patterned frame.
- Make gift wrapping paper by decorating with potato prints or stamp patterns.

Measurement and geometry

- Include your child in cooking activities and allow or support them to:
 - measure the ingredients
 - set the temperature on the oven
 - work out the cooking finish time.



- A child's understanding of volume and capacity can be developed when they:
 - pour glasses of water from the jug and discuss terms such as enough, full, empty, half or part full, more, less
 - pour from one container into another of a different shape to compare which holds more and which holds less.
- Scales can be used to compare the mass of different items or quantities e.g. compare an apple and an orange, measure the quantity of butter required for a recipe.

- Measuring length can be included by:
 - measuring and comparing height
 - cutting a length of string to tie a package
 - measuring who is closest to the jack in a backyard game of bocce or lawn bowls.
- Use the calendar to
 - learn the names and sequence of days in the week or months in the year
 - count the passing days or the number of days until an event.



- Identify shapes in the home e.g.
 - 2D shapes: tiles on floor and walls, shapes of windows, plates, bowls containers and toys
 - 3D shapes: cereal boxes (rectangular prism), balls (sphere), bottles or cans (cylinder), dice (cube).
- Play games that involve shapes e.g. jigsaw puzzles, tangrams.

- Talk about directions e.g. left, right, forwards, backwards and follow directions on a grid.

- Play games that involve directions and movement in space e.g. battleship, Hokey Pokey, Simon Says, Snakes and Ladders, Ludo, or readilearn's [Turtle Island – a directions game](#) .
- Read and discuss books that include measurement concepts e.g. Pamela Allen's **Who Sank the Boat?** (volume); Eric Carle's **The Very Hungry Caterpillar** (days of the week) and **The Bad Tempered Ladybird** (time); Penny Matthews and Andrew McLean's **A Year on our Farm** (months and seasons); and for looking at places on a map Mem Fox's **Sail Away The ballad of Skip and Nell** or Annette Langen & Constanza Droop's **Letters from Felix**.

Probability and statistics

- When discussing the weather or desired activities include the language of probability e.g. possible, certain, likely, unlikely, impossible.
- Encourage children to collect data about family or friends by asking yes/no questions e.g. do you like swimming, or making a graph of the family's favourite colour or meal.
- Play games with spinners and dice and talk about the likelihood of spinning or throwing a particular number.

