

Making lockdown fun for young children whilst still encouraging learning and developing skills.

If your child is in the Early Years Foundation stage you might want to have a quick look at the EYFS website to see what age / stage related expected outcomes are appropriate for your child. Most importantly, refer to the next steps your child's early years practitioner has identified.

Take a look at the Characteristics of Effective Learning (listed below). Playing with family in a relaxed atmosphere is the ideal opportunity to develop lots of these skills.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Playing and exploring

- Finding out and exploring
- Playing with what they know
- Being willing to 'have a go'

Active learning

- Being involved and concentrating
- Keeping trying
- Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creating and thinking critically

- Having their own ideas
- Making links
- Choosing ways to do things

Try to give praise when they are displaying these characteristics. Use lots of open-ended questions to encourage them to think and ask them for their ideas and suggestions about what to do next during the day.

If you are looking for a way to talk to your child about the Coronavirus epidemic then you could use this e-book as a starting point:

<https://nursedottybooks.com/dave-the-dog-is-worried-about-coronavirus-2/>

Daily plan

Make a daily plan to give your day some structure. Try to include a time for children to video/phone connect with grandparents and isolated family.

Do your best to include a variety of activities. You'll find lots of inspiration further down this document. However, do not be too hard on yourself and do not put too much emphasis on

formal education. Children learn best through play. As such it is important to allow **free play** with no particular time restraints. Give them an open-ended period of the day for free play. If your child is engrossed in playing with e.g. construction toys, small world play or puzzles, let them play for as long as they are interested.

Allow children to have a choice of activities and the order in which they are done. A choosing board is a good idea. Cut out all the activity pictures and let your child choose what to put on the board next. At the beginning of the day explain what each activity will involve e.g. cooking- what you will be cooking.

Tidy up time

Include times for chores and tidy up. It is important for children to realise that they are part of the family and need to help and follow rules.

Any chore that involves water is bound to be fun. Water sprays are great for cleaning up surfaces, painting easels etc and are good for strengthening finger muscles important for writing.

Try to make even tidying up fun by giving challenges such as – ‘How many blocks can you pick up with one hand?’ or ‘How many can you balance on your head? I can manage 3’. The main thing is spend more time giving praise for effort than being negative. This is easier said than done so sometimes a **reward chart** is needed and we have many available to download on our website (for example: <https://www.earlylearninghq.org.uk/class-management/behaviour-management/smiley-face-reward-chart/>)

Creating a wall planner

You could use our Daily Routine Cards to plan your day and show the activities that are available.

<https://www.earlylearninghq.org.uk/class-management/visual-timetables-routines/daily-activity-cards/>

Print out the relevant cards. Please note, the cards have editable text boxes so you can change the titles if they are not quite right for your needs. If you don't have a printer you can write your own.

Create two headings - ‘Things we **can do** today’ and ‘Things we’re **going to do** today’. You could type these headings or handwrite them – children could decorate them to make them look more stimulating and personal.

Display all of the cards underneath the first heading (things we can do today) and then work with your child / children to plan which cards will go under the second heading (things we’re going to do) and arrange them in the order you are going to do them using some sticky tac.

Display on a prominent board / wall.

Some of the things you might want to include in your daily routine: Art and craft, cooking, board / group games, phonic games, outdoor play, target games, singing, puzzles, sensory activity, role play activity.

All these activities can incorporate, maths, knowledge of the world, science, ICT, literacy and physical skills. The children will be learning without really realising it. However it is important that you point out what they are learning and what they have achieved. Try to incorporate anything that their teacher has pointed out as a next step.

Choosing what activities to offer will depend on your child's interests. Quite often this is around a favourite TV / story character – PJ Masks, Paw Patrol, Frozen etc.

We have lots of resources on our site around popular early years themes, which you may find useful. These include resources on superheroes, pirates, dinosaurs, the seaside / under the sea, farm animals, jungle animals, minibests, vehicles / transport. During the next few weeks we will be adding packs of resources on some of these topics. These will include new games and activities, and the resources needed for playing them. This will make it easier to find what you need.

Exercise

It is really important that children continue to have exercise, especially if they are not able to go to playgroup or nursery.

Movement ideas - inside and out

There is scope for movement opportunities indoors and out. Inside, try to organise a clear space with no obstacles. If using an outside area with no obvious boundary, identify the boundary areas by using trees, rocks etc. or items of clothing or cones.

Move to different rhymes and songs, e.g. Hickory Dickory Dock, Grand Old Duke of York, Round and round the Garden, and encourage your child to perform the actions in the rhyme.

1) Musical statues

If it's difficult to hear music outside use percussion instruments and add actions. You can show action word cards to encourage different actions and reading. You can use a different instrument for different action e.g. drum – jumping, tambourine -running, bell - hopping. They can use a marker as a starting spot. When music stops they must get back to their marker

The marker could be a decorated pebble or a piece of log, a circle of pebbles. Use a signal for the children to return to their marker eg a bell, shaker etc. If playing on your own with your child, have your own marker.

For games where a child needs to be chosen to be the chaser then get each child to decorate a pebble or a log slice. Keep them in a drawstring bag and get a child to pick one out to decide who will be the chaser. Keep a chart to show how many turns they've had. Or you can have a different coloured bag to keep the ones who've had a turn.

2) What's the Time Mr Wolf?

Play games such as what's the Time Mr Wolf? (fits in with lots of stories). You can change wolf to another animal/ character

This game encourages accurate counting of steps for the youngest children.

Add a cardboard clock and encourage the 'wolf' to change the hands or an adult can stand behind the wolf and change the hands. This will help children to learn the time and recognise the numbers to 12.

If children are learning to read use action cards with the words on them (A4 cards with very large font) jump, hop, step

A similar game to this is **Who are you Mr Dinosaur?**

<https://www.earlylearninghq.org.uk/themes/dinosaurs-themes/dinosaur-chase-game-who-are-you-mr-dinosaur/>

With a simple cotton bag to hold the dinosaur pictures with a number on each (1,2,3) and a Tyrannosaurus picture with the caption ' I will eat you' The dinosaur holds up a card for the children to move the number of steps indicated on the picture. When she holds up the tyrannosaurus picture she chases them and whoever she catches becomes the next dinosaur.

This encourages young children's number recognition and learning the names of dinosaurs.

3) Sheep, sheep come home?

All the children stand one side of the play area. A shepherd on the opposite side and a wolf hiding on one side of the area. The children say the following script (the adult needs to be the shepherd to begin with):

Shepherd: Sheep Sheep come home

Sheep/ children : No we're afraid

Shepherd: What are you afraid of?

Sheep / children: The wolf / dinosaur / pirate / etc

Shepherd : The Wolf's gone to London (substitute another place that means something to your child.....so come home!

The sheep move towards the shepherd and are chased by the wolf. Anyone caught joins hands with the wolf and they can both chase but only catch with their free hands. Younger children might be better with the first one caught being the next wolf.

4) The Beans game

This fits in with a food/ Jack in the Beanstalk theme.

One child is the chaser and sits or stands in the bean tin this could be a chair/ cushion or a chalk circle. To begin with the adult might call out the bean names until the children are

more confident and can remember the names and actions. As soon as they are confident the children can take over. The chaser chases them when Baked Beans is called out and the first one caught becomes the new chaser.

Runner Beans: Running

Frozen Beans: Stay still (freeze)

Jelly beans: Wobble

Broad beans: Walk with a wide stance and gait

Stick beans- Walk like a stick

Chilli beans: Fan yourself as if you are hot

French beans: Dance the Can Can

Jumping Beans: Jumping

5) Duck, Duck Goose

The Duck Duck goose game involves a chaser walking around a circle of seated children, patting each on the head and giving them the name *Duck*. When he decides who he wants to chase he pats that child on the head and says *Goose*. The goose then runs round the circle aiming to get back to his place before the chaser catches him.

This game can be adapted by using different names e.g. stegosaurus, triceratops, tyrannosaurus or Percy, Edward, Thomas if they wanted to go with a Thomas the Tank theme. Everyone decides which name is the one to cause the child to be chased before hand To make it more challenging and interesting they can use several names and not be limited to two as in the original game,

6) Traffic Lights

This game can be played by the adult saying a colour and the children doing the actions. For children learning colours they could be shown an object of the corresponding colour as the colour is called.

Green – run

Red- stop stand still

Amber- crouch down

7) Isn't it Funny Why a Bear likes Honey

Choose a child to be the bear. Children make a circle and the bear sits in the middle closing their eyes. Children walk around in a circle saying the rhyme.

'Isn't it funny how a bear likes honey?

Buzz, buzz, buzz, I wonder why he does.'

When the rhyme ends, the child who is standing directly behind the bear must walk very quickly towards them without making a sound. If the bear hears the child then they must say 'Buzz' and the game starts again. If the child successfully reaches the bear without being heard then all the children shout '*Wake up Mr Bear*' then bear chases the thief who must try to get back to their space without being caught. The chaser becomes the new bear.

This game can be enhanced by having an actual pot to be stolen or substitute this with a bell.

It can be adapted to a dinosaur theme by changing the rhyme to:

'The dinosaur is sleeping, as quiet as a mouse.

Try not to wake him- he's going to shake the house.'

8) Punchinello

This circle game encourages children's confidence and independence. The child in the centre of the circle performs an action and the rest of the children copy it. Punchinello has to choose who was the best performer to be Punchinello next time.

Search for it on Youtube link to hear the tune.

9) The Sea is very rough tonight

This is an excellent game for children who are building their **phonic awareness**.

The shark (chaser) is in the middle of a circle and the adult says the script. Older children could say the script with adult adding in the sound (with practice they could do it all)

'The Sea is very rough tonight and the Shark is very fierce

And he loves to catch the boys and girls whose names start with.....??'

The child/ children whose names begin with that sound begin running around the circle with the aim to get back to their place running in a clockwise direction. The shark tries to catch them.

Be aware that the sounds are important here not the letter, for instance a child called Cynthia should respond to the S sound.

You should also be aware that the initial sounds of names should be clear without adding an uuuuu sound to the letter e.g. m not mu . This is particularly important when blending sounds together to read words. For example if reading the word 'mat' it can't be decoded if you say mu... a.... tu, whereas m...a...t makes it easier and clearer. See DFE Letters and Sounds info online.

You will also find some phonic games on our website.

10) What can I do with ??? Action game

This is another Phonic movement game. You will need some cards with sounds written on them. Try and use the initial sounds of action words like jump, clap, run, stretch, hop

You can also include diphthongs such as th (throw, thump) and sh- (shake , shout) ch (chase, chop).

Instead of making your own cards you could pick the ones you want from the phoneme / grapheme cards available on our website:

With pictures:

<https://www.earlylearninghq.org.uk/latest-resources/phoneme-grapheme-snap-cards/>

Without pictures:

<https://www.earlylearninghq.org.uk/latest-resources/phoneme-grapheme-cards/>

Put the cards in a box or a bag.

Children take turns to pick a card.

Children can call out any actions they can think of beginning with that sound. If more than one is suggested try doing more than one together. Help out if the children can't think of actions or if the children are very young.

Everybody performs the action whilst saying the following rhyme (substituting for the relevant sound and action).

What can I do with c,c,c?,

I can clap with c,

Clap, clap, clap, clap,

I can clap with c