

Tips and resources for families with children under five (and a little bit older too!)

ACTIVITIES TO ENTERTAIN

Age	Ideas
0-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with soft balls – rolling, bouncing, throwing, squeezing, dropping/picking up • Play in cubby houses – use boxes or chairs/ tables with sheets or blankets over them to create the perfect space for hiding, reading, playing with dolls etc • Make and play with playdough – there are uncooked and cooked recipes freely available on the internet. Children over 1 can help make uncooked playdough. • Play with loose parts such as kitchen utensils (eg saucepans and lids, wooden spoons), unused phone/ keyboards, tires, PVC pipes. – explore the different ways to use these items. Can they be musical? Have music playing in the background and accompany it and sing along. • Painting – use short and thick paintbrushes, or sponges, or fingers. Make your own paint. • Dancing and singing – repeated over and over! • Peek-a-boo – never gets old...mix it up by using a light scarf in front of your child's face (not over it) and swish it away as a dramatic reveal, play around with the timing of the reveal as the anticipation is part of the fun.
3-4	<p>Any activities listed in the 0-2 age range plus;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardening – have your child help plant some seedlings/plants/vegies and then help care for them (eg they can be in charge of watering them) • Cooking or baking (for example, sushi, slices, crackers with toppings) • Construction – Duplo/Lego (choose what is appropriate for your child's level of development) • Puzzles • Face painting • Listen to age-appropriate podcasts or online stories • Musical bop – put on your favourite music, have someone randomly stop it... and when it stops everyone drops • Games – What's the Time Mr Wolf?, Charades, Hide and Seek, Hopscotch • Card games – snap, matching games. Make your own matching games by printing out photos of family/friends/items and sticking on to thick cardboard cut into squares/card sizes. Have two of each photo, mix them up, turn them all face down. Each player turns over two

	<p>cards and if they match they are removed and the player gets another turn. If they don't match they are turned over and the next player has a turn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple obstacle course – use hoops, chairs, rulers/ropes to create a course for moving over/under/around • How long can you keep a balloon/feather in the air? • Dress ups and role plays – parents/siblings clothes are always popular • Simple ball games – throw balls into a basket; Bowling...set up empty plastic milk bottles and roll a ball to knock over as many as possible; fly swatter hockey...use a cardboard box as a goal at each end of the space and each player has a fly swatter (or similar) to swat the small plastic ball into the other goal • Craft using recyclable materials – all you need is some glue, sticky tape, and lots of recyclable materials (eg milk cartons, boxes) and the sky's the limit! It can be open ended or there can be a challenge (make a robot, make the tallest tower)
<p>5-8</p>	<p>Any of the activities above (modified to make more challenging where appropriate) plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent show (can be with the family or on zoom with a broader group) • Jewellery making – thread plastic beads onto cotton • Rock painting – collect rocks on a walk, clean them and then paint! • Origami – there are lots of ideas on the internet for making simple origami creations • Rearrange their bedroom • Board games • Memory / matching games & card games • Simple games: Noughts and Crosses, Dots and Boxes (play a computer in this version) • Reader's theatre • Playground games like 'Raid the nest'...each person has a 'home' (could be a basket/box/hoop) that is an equal distance from the 'nest'. The 'nest' is full of items (eg balls, small containers, socks, shoes) and on 'go' each player runs to take items from the 'nest' to put in their 'home'. Players can also take from other player's 'homes'. Can only take one item at a time. The winner is the 'home' with the most items at the end of the designated time. • Measurement activities around the house – for example, estimate how many steps to an object and then count them out; how many items are needed to fill up a cardboard box/basket. • What is going on today in... Search the globe for an area/ or country of the world and then try to find a newspaper or magazine online from that region and see what is making news there. Are there any special celebrations going on in that place that are different to Australia? Is there anything similar in Australia? Use Google Maps to look at the different views of the place – birds eye vs street view. What do you notice and see? • Do some scientific drawing: cut open a capsicum and draw and label all the parts; Collect leaves from the ground then draw them and label their parts. • Play towns: make a town out of recycled bottles, shoe boxes, jars, etc. Include all the buildings and spaces you might need. Where should the parks go? Will you have a community pool? What kinds of buildings will you have? Can you make the buildings suit their purpose? For example, could the art gallery for the town be in an interesting, unusual container?

Keep it safe

- Be careful with items that can be swallowed (e.g. marbles, playdough that is made into small balls)
- Keeping safe: <https://kidsafe.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/201906-Final-A-Parents-Guide-to-Kidsafe-Homes-Web.pdf>
- Have plenty of space
- Keep children away from hot stove tops or ovens
- Driveways can be hazardous if children are playing in the same places where cars are.
- Hold hands and talk about how to cross the road safely when going for walks
- Consider internet safety: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/safety>
 - Install software on your home computer to limit the sites that children may go to
 - Monitor how your child uses the internet and talk to them about safe practices
- Be cautious about activities from websites or You Tube that may not be safe especially science activities. A common activity is making slime but some ingredients of slime, like Borax, can be hazardous.

TIPS FOR WORKING AT HOME WITH CHILDREN

- Make the day predictable for your child so they know what to expect by keeping them to a routine as best you can.
 - Break the day up with meal times (breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner).
 - Encourage outdoor play, even if cold or raining...according to Billy Connelly, there is no such thing as bad weather, there is just poor clothing choice 😊
 - Have quiet and active times through the day.
- If possible, invest in a trampoline (preferably with an enclosed safety net) – most children love them and they are great for physical development as well as burning off excess energy
- Preschoolers love pretend play and like to copy the adults in their lives and often like to be near the adults in their lives so set up an ‘office’ for your child near yours, for them to be at work while you are:
 - Can be as simple as a small table and chair
 - Have a range of items in easy access that they can ‘work’ with (paper, pens, pencils, ruler, safety scissors, glue, stapler, clip board, general craft items etc)
 - Suggest some ‘jobs’ they can do while ‘working’ eg make a card/sign to show a grandparent when they zoom them tomorrow, create a sign for their bedroom door, make a simple hat for a family hat parade
- Ask family/close friends to read stories/play games with your child over zoom (especially useful if you have a meeting you need to be in)
- Include relaxation/quiet times each day and (depending on their age) have set times for all people in your house to have some ‘me’ time

- Have a designated space for alone time – for your child this might be a special cubby house you and your child have set up (see above – this can be as simple as a blanket over some chairs)
- Agree on a time limit eg 10 minutes and have a timer go off at the end. The length of time will depend on your child’s age and mood and this is not to be used as a punishment ie it is not ‘time out’
- Encourage your child to use this time to imagine – eg what might they tell grandma when they next speak to her? If they were an astronaut, what would they take in the spaceship with them
- When you need to go to the bathroom and your child decides they have to talk to you/be with you – depending on their age, let them know that it is mummy’s/daddy’s private time and then give them something age appropriate to do in the interim eg while I’m in the bathroom...let’s see how high you can you count, sort the pegs into colours, draw a rainbow/mummy/our house. This can be done outside the closed bathroom door (or further away as they get used to this happening)

USEFUL WEBSITES

General – parenting tips and resources (includes mindfulness and relaxation tips)	Raising Children Network
ABC for Kids - Games, craft, shows, listening activities	www.abc.net.au/abckids/
Playground games for preschool and school children	www.weareteachers.com/recess-games/
Science	Fizzics Education
General Play activities	Ella’s List Playgroup NSW
Drawing/ playdough	raisingchildren.net.au/babies/play-learning raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/play-learning
Playing with household items	mommypoppins.com/ny-kids/50-indoor-activities-for-a-rainy-day handsonaswegrow.com/indoor-activities-toddlers/ raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/play-learning
Indoor ball games	www.whatdowedoallday.com/indoor-ball-games-kids
Indoor activities	www.allprodad.com/indoor-fun-kids/
Reader’s Theatre	www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm
Craft for upper primary age children	www.happinessishomemade.net/40-crafts-for-tweens-teens/
NSW Department of Education learning from home	education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/learning-from-home
Time Digital Library (now free)	time.com/tfk-free/
Digital Lunchbreak – a variety of activities and resources that government and non-government organisations have made available for children and young people in response to COVID-19	Digital Lunchbreak