



TEN

**The guide to
entertaining
children at home**



It's never easy keeping children entertained in one place for a sustained period of time, particularly when you want to minimise screen time and find ways to stimulate their minds that doesn't simply involve a TV, a computer, a phone or a tablet. But there are plenty of activities, games, educational aids and parenting techniques that can help you fill the time in a way that's both fun and rewarding. Here is a selection of simple solutions for all ages that will keep the kids occupied – and keep the peace – as well as developing individual skills, imagination and learning.

Social impact gaming

Ideal for age 8+

First the good news: not all computer games are intrinsically bad. A whole genre of “social impact gaming” has emerged, which is aimed at benefitting emotional and mental well-being. These, such as the real-time, free-to-play island life sim

Paraiso Island from One Earth Rising,

promote positive end goals and story arcs – such as the preservation of life, nature or fuel rather than mindless destruction or monetary reward.

Learn an instrument

Ideal for 6+

Mastering how to play a musical instrument – and even to compose tunes oneself – is not only a hugely rewarding and pleasurable hobby, but also helps to stimulate the mathematical side of the brain, aiding everything from pattern recognition to the improvisational impulse. There are plenty of self-help books and online resources for children away from formal schooling and Apple’s GarageBand is excellent for compositions – ask us about our preferential rates on selected Apple products. Concierge can also help you to source a relevant, accredited tutor.

Become an artist

Ideal for 4+

Children’s natural tendency to draw is a key factor in their development: helping them to visualise and problem-solve through observation, and providing them with skills that will give a lifetime of pleasure. **YouTube** has dedicated channels devoted to drawing tutorials – often presented by their peers, making technicalities from shading to perspective feel a lot less daunting. For old school, gentle charm, the **Vice TV channel** now airs daily episodes of Bob Ross’ legendary The Joy of Painting.

Lionheart Education online tutoring

Ideal for all ages

Regardless of your location, **Lionheart Education** provides advanced academic assistance to students through its online tutoring programme. Founded in 1989, this esteemed tutoring service has been the UK’s leading provider of educational consultancy, private tuition and bespoke schooling to the world’s most prominent families, pairing experienced tutors with students in an interactive classroom complete with whiteboard, video and voice links, offering expert one-to-one education remotely.



Household science

Ideal for 4+

For budding physicists and chemists, the home is full of ingredients ripe for household experiments. Raid the kitchen and bathroom for the key elements for making everything from indoor volcanoes to slime. (For the former, all you need is soap, white vinegar, baking soda, food colouring and water; for the latter, simply mix together baking soda, contact lens solution, food dye, glue and water – plus any glitter, beads, sparkles or sequins you have on hand.)

Consequences

Ideal for 6+

Most schoolchildren will at some point have played a version of the game Consequences. One person writes an opening line on a piece of paper, folding it over to reveal only the final word of the sentence on a new line. The next person then continues the story in similar fashion, folding the paper in turn. It can be played by any number of people, and the results – whether genius or nonsensical – are always hilarious.

Learn to code

Ideal for 3+

For developing sequencing skills even further, **Botley The Coding Robot** is designed to teach children aged 5-10 the basics of computer coding in a fun, engaging way. Children are taught to create an initial path of up to 80 steps using a remote control for the toy robot, which then learns and develops with its user. Easy to use and 100% screen-free, it helps in the development of critical thinking and basic computer science.

Build your own 3D model

Ideal for 4+

From simple origami animals to more complex designs, you can create 3D models using anything from a single sheet of paper to cereal packets and cardboard boxes. Templates for folding and/or cutting your 2D surface can easily be found online, either to be printed out or – for bolder architects – as a basis for improvisation. Life-size robots, cars, skyscrapers, wearable armour and more can be fashioned from the cardboard in your recycling bin.

The Genius Square game

Ideal for 6+

The aim of **this puzzle game** is to fill in a grid-like board using the Tetris-style shaped wooden blocks, with blank squares determined randomly by rolling a set of dice. There are over 62,208 possible combinations, each one with at least one solution (and often several more). Simple, ingenious, frustrating and addictive, the game aids spatial awareness, visual perception, strategic planning and sequencing.

Get physical

Ideal for all ages

Maintaining physical health through exercise is of course hugely important, and can help in mental well-being too – not to mention using up all that energy to give the parents some much needed peace and quiet. Some free, easy ideas include age-old favourites like hide and seek, Sardines, hopscotch, what's the time mr wolf, skipping, hula hooping, building a den and garden boules. If there is opportunity to use outdoor space – be it a park, garden or local woods – nothing beats fresh air and exploring nature. But even if you're stuck indoors, get the kids involved by following yoga and keep fit routines online, on DVD or streamed on TV – **The Body Coach** has some excellent workouts for kids.





*Every happy memory created for a child
is another treasure of a lifetime*

Donna Marie





Get competitive

Ideal for 4+

Encourage a bit of family rivalry by creating your own bake-off competition at home, setting yourselves challenges based on various themes and awarding points for invention and imagination as well as cookery skills. And don't forget, there's still time to enter the real Junior Bake Off – the deadline for applications has been extended to 8.59pm on 5 April (candidates must be aged over nine on 1 June 2020 but under 16 on 30 September 2020). For details, visit:

<https://junior.take-part.co.uk>

Acts of kindness

Ideal for all ages

The elderly and infirm can feel isolated at the best of times but small gestures to remind them that they are not forgotten and are in your thoughts go a long way. Encourage your children to write letters or create drawings that you can post to relatives or put through your neighbours' letterboxes. Or try baking cakes with your kids and deliver them next door. Video calling via Skype or setting up WhatsApp groups for friends, neighbours and family can also provide extra reassurance.

Connect with friends

Ideal for 4+

They may be out of school, but your children can still use technology and safe social media to stay in touch. Rather than just chatting, why not suggest they engage in group online activities that reflect their hobbies: set up a virtual book club to encourage them to read and share their thoughts, use video group messaging to launch an online choir or practice dance routines... it can even be a fun way to encourage following the school syllabus by sharing tasks and schoolwork with their classmates. Download the easy to use **Houseparty app**, which allows group video chat.

Join the magic circle

Ideal for 5+

Encourage your children to learn some new tricks by taking up magic and putting on a show for the family. There are plenty of beginners' magic sets you can buy online or from toy stores, as well as online tutorials and demonstrations on YouTube. Why not learn from the best – Penn & Teller offer a **YouTube Masterclass** revealing some of their secrets, under the subjects of Misdirection, Mentalism, Cups & Balls, Coin Manipulation, Psychology of Magic and Performance.

Create a family tree

Ideal for all ages

Have you ever noticed how your parents will share family stories and anecdotes with their grandchildren that they've never even told you? Get your kids to interview their grandparents about their lives and what they remember from distant relatives in order to create a family book together, or explore your family tree (adding photos, drawings and even physical items from trinkets to medals). If they want to explore even further, there are plenty of online resources such as **findmypast.com** and **ancestry.com** where you can investigate your family tree.



Green fingers

Ideal for 4+

If you have a garden or outside space, urge them to get their hands dirty while engaging with nature. They could help with the gardening – from planting to weeding – or dedicate a whole area for them to tend. A herb garden or vegetable patch that they can actively develop and then enjoy the produce from is incredibly rewarding. Alternatively, they could build insect hotels or create their own bird feeders (add seeds to a block of lard or fat suspended from an upturned yoghurt container). If you don't have a garden, there are still plenty of options for windowsill versions, too. For ideas, tips and inspiration, visit the [**CBeebies web page**](#).