

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Homeschooling Resources



Getting Started

With the need to practice social distancing has come the need for many parents to be first-time homeschool teachers.

Depending on how many resources your school has provided, tracking down the needed resources and materials to get started can feel like a daunting task.

A good starting point for core subjects is the Core Knowledge Foundation (www.coreknowledge.org.) The organization offers detailed curricular guidance, which lays out what children should know at each grade, as well as provides some of the needed materials. TeachersPayTeachers.com, where teachers make educational resources they've created available for a fee, or sometimes for free, is another good starting point.

Here are some more ideas and free online resources to help you begin your homeschooling journey.

MATH

Khan Academy is useful for students (and parents) who struggle with math. Founder Salman Khan publishes short videos explaining math concepts. Then students can practice what they know with online practice questions and quizzes. The site covers math concepts from basic counting through high school AP classes. Parents can sign up as



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teachers, which allows them to assign content for students to cover and track their progress. While you're there, check out the other course offerings, which include science and engineering, arts and humanities, social-emotional learning, economics and finance, computing, test prep and more.

READING

Research shows that it's good for children to not just read on their own but to have books read aloud to them.

Check out the Storyline Online channel on YouTube, where celebrities read children's books for the camera, along with illustrations. The channel comes from the SAG-AFTRA Foundation's award-winning children's literacy website Storyline Online, and has featured readings by Betty White, Oprah Winfrey, Kristen Bell, James Earl Jones and Al Gore.

To keep kids writing and help them process their feelings about the upheaval in their schedule, include journaling in their language arts

time each day. Ask younger kids to make a video journal about what's happening each day and how they feel. Older kids can write anywhere from a couple of sentences to a few paragraphs each day.

SCIENCE

The web has a wealth of resources for science education. If your children are visual learners, check out the TV series Xploration DIY Sci, available through Amazon Prime Video and through some cable TV packages. Each

episode sees scientist Steve Spangler tackle a science topic with hands-on experiments and analysis.

Discovery Education is offering its entire library of science content available free to any school or teacher that requests it. Email your school or school district to ask about setting up access.

If your child is interested in computer programming, take a look at Amazon's Future Engineer program at www.edhesive.com/amazon/free_access. The program is being offered free to U.S.-based parents during the COVID-19-related school closures. Courses include basic coding for middle-schoolers, and courses in Python, AP computer science and Java programming for high-schoolers.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Head to Thought.co for a list of free printable social studies worksheets covering everything from Medieval times to World War II to Black History Month.

For more visual learners, the Crash Course channel on YouTube features fun animated videos for kids about a range of topics, including world, U.S. and European history. Some titles have included "World War II," "Economic Depression and Dictators," "Post World War II Society and Economy," "The Monarchy: European History," and "The Atomic Bomb." Similarly, the LibertyKidsTV YouTube channel covers American history through animated videos.

Virtual Field Trips

You can't venture out into public to visit landmarks and popular attractions, but you can still take a field trip, via technology. (Plus no bumpy bus ride or 20+ screaming kids to deal with.)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Boeing offers looks at the Johnson Space Center and more through its Future U website (www.boeingfutureu.com/virtual-field-trip). Or check out how manufacturing works with virtual field trip videos from ManufactureYourFuture.com (<https://bit.ly/33D-JGvp>).

Arizona State University immerses students in 360-degree images shot at scientific points of interest all over the world at <https://vft.asu.edu/>. Locations include the Grand Canyon, a Panamanian rainforest, Australian archaeological sites, Mesoamerican pyramids in Mexico and the terrain of Mars.

The Nature Conservancy (<https://bit.ly/397orDi>) also offers online virtual tours of everything from the deserts and grasslands of Africa to an island powered entirely by solar energy to a scuba diving adventure in the waters off the Dominican Republic.



Screenshot of the Cold War Gallery from the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force's virtual tour website.

ANIMALS

You could also let kids explore Google Earth (www.google.com/earth), which combines satellite and aerial images into what Google bills as "the world's most detailed globe." "Visit" natural and manmade wonders all over the world, state and national parks, monuments, historical sites and more. Fly over the Matterhorn or hover over the Great Barrier Reef. Read "knowledge cards," which provide basic info about land-

marks. ("The Eiffel tower is a wrought iron lattice tower on the Champs de Mars in Paris, France.") You also can see additional photographs of many locations.

Technology makes it easy to take a trip to the zoo. Tune in to the panda cam at the Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington, D.C., the Atlanta Zoo or the San Diego Zoo. The Cincinnati Zoo is offering Facebook Live videos called Home Safari each weekday, in which zookeepers introduce

viewers to a zoo animal and answer questions live. The first episode saw Fiona the hippo greeting eager viewers from her enclosure at the zoo.

Aquariums offer similar virtual experiences. Check out the Monterey Bay Aquarium's "Jellycam" to see what the jellyfish are up to, or take a virtual tour of the National Aquarium or Seattle Aquarium.

At www.farmfood360.ca, you can take a tour of all things agriculture: a grain farm, chicken, pig, sheep and cow farms, as

well as a milk and cheese processing facility, among others.

ARTS AND CULTURE

You can even visit many museums across the globe virtually. Good Housekeeping rounds up the best offerings at <https://bit.ly/2WFvZLA>. (They also include zoos, aquariums and theme parks.)

Check out Google Arts and Culture's massive collection at <https://artsandculture.google.com>, including a guided tour option.

Get Creative with Crafts

Being cooped up at home doesn't mean you can't have a ton of fun being creative at the dining room table. Crafts will keep the little ones busy and keep their creativity blooming.

Since a trip to the store for supplies is not a good idea right now, here are some ideas from around the web for easy projects you can do with common household items and basic crafting supplies.

MAKE CARDS

Paper crafts are the most basic of crafts. All you need is construction paper (even printer paper will do in a pinch), some markers or crayons, and your creativity. USA Today reports that since nursing homes have had to stop allowing visitors, they are asking children to send cards to brighten their residents' days. (Scanning or taking photos and emailing them might be a better option at this point, however, to avoid spreading germs.)

PAPER BAG CRAFTS

All you need is a package of paper bags and a few other basic supplies to make these fun crafts.

Paper bag village: With the provided template, you can cut and color an entire village, then glue your "buildings" to the



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bags and line them up down a make-believe street. Visit <https://bit.ly/2QEiur9> for templates.

Paper bag monster puppets: Another easy, fun way to use paper bags is to turn them into puppets. First paint the bags with acrylic paint. Then glue on eyes, stripes, horns, teeth and other fun details made of construction paper. Get ideas here: <https://bit.ly/2wAnjdY>.

PASTA BUTTERFLIES

Acrylic paints can turn far-

falle pasta into butterflies. Have fun decorating the "wings," then glue your creations to construction paper. Use a permanent marker to draw on the antennae and other details. Find the instructions here: <https://bit.ly/2wAnw0K>.

CRAFTS FOR TWEENS

Older kids might want projects with more detail and options to personalize the craft to their interests. They can learn the basics of origami at [<https://bit.ly/2Ud6QFE>. Lush-inspired bath bombs are simple to make, with baking soda, citric acid \(used for pickling\) and cornstarch as the main ingredients. Check out a tutorial from TheSpruce.com at <https://bit.ly/2Ud6QFE>.](https://origami.me/begin-</p>
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GET OUTSIDE

Going outdoors is copacetic, provided you keep your distance from neighbors. So why not whip up some outdoors fun for your family? Highlights

magazine offers ideas for making your own bubbles (<https://bit.ly/3bpWWWT>) and sidewalk chalk (<https://bit.ly/2y4Z2NJ>) from materials you probably already have at home.

Teach Independence Skills

Can your 12-year-old wash his own clothes and cook a meal for the family? Can you 5-year-old brush her teeth, comb her hair and wash her face without help? If not, take the opportunity to start working on independence skills with your kids.

Parents have a lot to do, so teaching your kids independence skills not only prepares them for life, but it also frees up some of your time and reduces your stress level. It's a win-win. It does, however, require effort and a lot of trial and error.

If you aren't sure which skills your kids should have at which age, check out FamilyEducation.com's age-by-age guide to life skills at <https://bit.ly/2WAt0U1>.

Here are some ideas on skills to teach while you're spending a lot of time at home.

CHORES

Laundry, cooking and yard work are all appropriate age-level skills for children 10 and above, according to FamilyEducation.com. (After all, if kids can work a video game controller, they can certainly work a washing machine.) If you haven't taught these skills, start with small tasks, such as sorting laundry



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or chopping vegetables, and encourage your children to work their way up to full independence.

ORGANIZATION

Ask kids to make a schedule for their day. According to Scholastic.com, even pre-

schoolers can benefit from a picture schedule to start learning time management, and grade-schoolers should be learning to plan long-term projects and set priorities. Teens should learn about balancing socializing (including time spent on social media)

and their education.

PROJECTS

Giving kids projects to do can help them learn and take pride in their own independence. Let your child choose a project of which to take ownership. This can be a long-term

project, such as planting a garden or redecorating their bedroom, or a short-term project, such as building a craft or small wood project, or hand-making a Halloween costume. Let them research, plan and execute the project, only providing input when absolutely necessary.

With all independence skills, it's important to know that your child will not "get it right" the first time. There will be lots of wrinkled laundry and half-cooked chicken — and lots of patience required on your part. Kids learn from failure. It's your job to remind them that you believe they can do it, and encourage them to learn a lesson from their failure and try again.

Also keep in mind that they might be more willing to take ownership of a task when you allow them to do it their own way. They might be perfectly happy to wear a wrinkled shirt, and you might have to be OK with that.

For more help teaching independence skills, follow HR Mom on Facebook. Melissa B. Griffin says her advice is "for parents who realize they have ONE JOB: to work themselves out of a job." She offers ideas for teaching independence and leadership skills. In one post, she challenged her 15-year-old son to take on the task of replacing a broken headlight on the family car, including finding and purchasing the part, and using a YouTube video to learn how to complete the repair and finishing the job.

Staying Social

Social distancing doesn't mean we need to be lonely.

Staying in touch during challenging times can help us stay emotionally healthy.

“Anxiety, unease and missing your connections with friends, family and others can take a toll on well-being,” said Professor Dana M. Litt, PhD, of the University of North Texas. “While physical distancing is what’s being called for right now, we shouldn’t underestimate the basic human need for social support and interaction. Not only does it enrich our lives, it also keeps us happy and well.”

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH NEIGHBORS

Ahead of St. Patrick’s Day, a viral social media post urged neighborhoods to play a game in which people put up paper shamrocks on their windows and doors, allowing neighbors to go on a shamrock hunt. Another creative idea has been having children decorate their sidewalks with sidewalk chalk messages and pictures for their neighbors to see while taking walks around the neighborhood. Think of creative ways to keep your neighborhood in touch from a distance.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Checking in on family



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members is a great way to keep family connections strong.

“For many young adults, communicating online is a major part of their social life, and especially so when they can’t be face-to-face with friends,” said Litt. Younger kids also need the continued connections to their peers that play dates provide. Professor Melissa A. Lewis,

PhD, of UNT added, “Let them know the seriousness of what we’re facing right now and offer them alternatives for staying close with their friends in new and different ways.”

Facebook Messenger offers a chat service for kids that allows parents to approve all contacts. Alternatively, allow kids to connect via FaceTime or Google Hangouts, as well as monitored online games.

CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Social media sites such as Nextdoor are a great way to learn about needs in your immediate community and help meet them.

For example, perhaps a neighbor is collecting face masks for hospitals. Perhaps an elderly neighbor needs help getting to the grocery store. Staying in touch with

our community is more important now than ever, despite the challenges. Also check with local organizations for ways to volunteer from home.

Hospitals in some areas have asked for homemade face masks (ask your hospital before donating), and some charities could use volunteers to make phone calls from home.

Learn about Germs

It's a great time to teach your kids about germs and, in particular, COVID-19. This exercise can serve as a science lesson while helping ease kids' anxiety about the threat of the disease.

PBS.org recommends providing your children with age-appropriate information about the disease, reassuring kids that they are safe and many people are working to keep us healthy, and teaching kids how to take reasonable hygiene precautions to prevent the spread of disease.

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Learning about COVID-19 can help allay fears children may have about the disease. KidsHealth.org recommends first asking what your children already knows about the disease. If your kids don't seem interested in talking about the issue, that's OK. If they do want to talk, answer any questions they have honestly, and if you don't know the answer, be honest about that, too. Speak calmly and be reassuring.

If your children are getting information from questionable sources, such as sensationalized websites or click-bait headlines, talk to them about evaluating their sources of information. Offer appropriate sources of information for children, such as the CNN 10 news show (<https://www.cnn.com/cnn10>), Student News Daily (www.studentnewsdaily.com) or PBS NewsHour Extra (www.pbs.org/news-hour/extra).

Check in with your children often to see what new information they've been taking in about the disease, so you can answer any new questions they might have. Be sure they are not obsessing and constantly taking in information about the pandemic.

Be sure children know the symp-

toms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, and in some cases, flu-like symptoms), so they can report them to you if they experience them.

TEACH ABOUT PREVENTION

Educating children about their role in preventing spread of disease helps them feel in control of some part of the situation. Talk about the importance of proper handwashing, sneezing or coughing into their elbow, social distancing, not touching their faces, eating well and getting enough sleep.

Teeangers are old enough to have a more adult conversation about their role in preventing the disease and take in media about the toll the disease is taking.

TEACH A LESSON

If you're homeschooling, consider doing a unit about viruses, including coronavirus. BrainPop's animated explanation of the virus is a good place to start. It's part of an entire lesson on viruses, including quizzes, worksheets, recommended reading, a graphic organizer and related games. See the lesson at <https://bit.ly/3af-5pvT>.

German science content provider Kurzgesagt: In a Nutshell, also offers a kid-appropriate explainer of the disease. Watch it at <https://bit.ly/2vP37oA>.

The National Science Teaching Association offers a list of resources for teaching about coronavirus at <https://bit.ly/39aB3JX>.



Stay Engaged Locally

The COVID-19 outbreak has reminded us all how much we depend on each other.

As we deal with the effects of social distancing at a time when our local communities need us more than ever, it's important to bring kids into the conversation about community.

Here is a list of ways you can engage with your local community during this challenging time and help your kids form good habits for the future.

Local business: Teach your children about how local businesses keep the local economy afloat, and how important it is to continue supporting local businesses during the economic slowdown caused by social distancing. Buy gift certificates to businesses whose services you can't use right now and put them away for later or give them as gifts.

Local museums: Check to see if your local museums are offering virtual tours or live online activities. Plan visits when they reopen.

Local seniors: Since coronavirus is particularly threatening to senior citizens, have your child help you brainstorm ways to help our your community's seniors. This could include organizing a group of children to sing to seniors by video conferencing or organizing an effort to pick



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up grocery orders for seniors in the community.

Local nature: Go for a walk around your neighborhood and appreciate all it has to offer. Look up information about birds in your area and try to identify them.

Take in local scenery by painting or photographing it. Consider hosting an online photo or art contest for kids featuring their neighborhood's flora and fauna.

Local food: Dine-in might be closed, but take-out, deliv-

ery and drive-thru are still an option. Enjoy all the foods your local eateries have to offer. Encourage kids to try new flavors and types of food.

Local startup: If you are out of work, consider starting a small, local family business.

This will allow you to contribute to the local economy during lean times, and perhaps provide a product or service that's vital to the COVID-19 community response. Allow kids to help with advertising and social media.