

# A to Z Activities for Engaging School Going Children During Lockdown

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## Abstract

Pandemic of Novel Corona Virus disease is rampant and self-isolation or quarantine is one of the core strategies in flattening the curve of infection rates. It means that schools are going to be closed for relatively longer time. Such thought of staying at home with kids during the lockdown has built up a certain amount of stress and anxiety among parents. For them, it has become essential than ever to spend time with their kids and plan their day. Parents are suddenly getting confused for resources to keep their kids engaged in productive activities. With schools shut, children are also bound to feel more agitated and confused than ever, causing them to react in ways that may be new for parents. As such, it becomes important for parents to strike a balance between work and spending time with their kids, and understanding the ways in which the lockdown experience can be made simpler and healthier for the entire family.

**Keywords:** *Pandemic, quarantine, skill development, Covid-19.*

## Introduction

The government of India Initially has declared a total lockdown, in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, for 21 days which has extended further. Even the most tolerant people will have their limits tested as they are forced to stay indoors. Parents are wondering about lockdown activities to keep kids occupied<sup>1,2,3</sup>. Children are the most vulnerable section of society right now as schools across the country are closed and they are forced to be at home day in and day out. They dislike staying indoors too long and like to go out and play and interact with their mates. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the parents to keep children engaged during lockdown with productive quarantine activities. Zafirakou says

it is important to limit screen time while children are learning at home<sup>4,5</sup>.

This can be done by engaging them in activities that are fun learning opportunities.

Ensure that the play area is hygienic and safe for your kid to plays alone there. Kids can be supervised through CCTV Camera.

**Here are A to Z activities to keep kids busy during lockdown:**

**A. Art and Craft:** By involving your kids in art and craft, you will not only be helping them pass the time easily but also be giving wings to their creativity. By making easy and simple craft projects helps the children to sharpen their artistic talents and whet their minds. Provide them lots of craft supplies such as paper sheets, glue, tapes, kid-friendly scissors, glitter, craft kits, etc. for setting up a creative space. Encourage your kid to create something new every day using those supplies.

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- B. Build with Lego:** Lego toys are so popular among children as it gives lot of fun but artfully, they also teach the fundamentals of physics. Start with simpler structures and as your kid begins to get hold of the concept and then move towards more advanced ones. This exercise alone will keep your kid occupied for hours and is perfect for beating boredom.
- C. Chat with friends:** It's really important for the children to communicate with their friends. Parents can set up online meetings with their children's friends. Not every day, but during the week, there should be some way they are connected with somebody else that's not you, and not another adult. They want their space and parents should allow them to talk with their friends to share their ideas.
- D. Do It Yourself:** Apart from the most obvious advantage of getting our children away from screens and gadgets, creative projects help children with inspiration, imagination and good motor skills. Getting messy sometimes and creating things is actually as important as outdoor play and reading. It helps to develop bilateral coordination, Fine motor skills, and Self regulation. It acts as a esteem booster and encourage self expression. 1
- E. Exercise:** A 2019 study published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that serotonin, a mood-regulating chemical the body produces, increases during exercise and can boost the energy and also associated with feelings of well-being, heightening of appetite, and lessening of mental depression. Combining regular physical activity with a healthy diet is the key to a healthy lifestyle. It should be variety of age-appropriate activities and with fun, so kids will come back for more. 2,3,4
- F. Fancy dress celebration:** Fancy dress also helps children develop emotionally, being a channel where children can freely express themselves. It also helps children communicate with others, and by playing the characters that they love they learn control their emotional responses. Fancy dress helps children develop their imagination. You can share these photographs to relatives and friends. 5
- G. Gardening:** A garden provides the opportunity to make a positive environmental impact. Planting a garden provides enjoyment. Watching your garden go from bare ground to ripe produce or beautiful

plants offers a sense of satisfaction. It makes your child responsible and caring. Some gardeners find the activity relaxing and stress-relieving, for overall mental health benefits. Caring for the plants gives the entire family a chance to work together. Gardening also offers a form of moderate outdoor exercise.<sup>6</sup>

- H. Helping in household chores:** Children can learn a lot many things from doing household chores. Doing chores helps children to care for themselves, a home and a family. They **learn skills** they can use in their adult lives, like preparing meals, cleaning and organizing the home. It helps for easing family stress, and breaking away from gender stereotypes. Being involved in chores also gives children **experience of relationship skills** like communicating clearly, negotiating, cooperating and working as a team. When children contribute to family life, it **helps them feel competent and responsible**. Even if sometimes they don't enjoy it, when they keep on doing they get the feeling of satisfaction that comes with finishing a task<sup>6,7</sup>.

Here are some ideas for chores for children of different ages.

#### **Toddlers (2-3 years):**

- Pick up toys and books.
- Put clothes on clothes hooks.
- Set placemats on the dinner table.

#### **Preschoolers (4-5 years)**

- Set the table for meals.
- Help put clean clothes into piles for each family member, ready to fold.
- Help with grocery shopping and putting away groceries.
- Hand you wet clothes to be hung out to dry.

#### **School-age children (6-8 years)**

- Water the garden and indoor plants.
- Feed pets.
- Clean the bathroom sink, wipe down kitchen benches, mop floors or take out rubbish.
- Help hang out clothes and fold washing.
- Put away crockery and cutlery.
- Help with choosing meals and shopping.

- Help with meal preparation and serving, under supervision.
- I. Indoor Games:** By playing games, students become more motivated to learn, pay attention and participate in set tasks. Games help students to become a part of a team as well as take responsibility for their own learning. There are so many indoor games like chess, carrom, playing cards, UNO Snakeladder, Ludo and many more .Playing these games with family is really a great joy.<sup>8</sup>
- J. Jigsaw puzzles:** Jigsaw puzzles exercise the left and right sides of your brain at once. It improves your short-term memory and improves your visual-spatial reasoning. Jigsaw puzzles are a great meditation tool and stress reliever. Starting a jigsaw puzzle and keeping it on a table in your living room or kitchen is an invitation for the whole family to participate, whenever they have a few minutes to sit down and focus. It's a tactic that parents of teens can use for starting a conversation while working toward a shared goal.<sup>9</sup>
- K. Kid's Recipes:** This quarantine is a great time to teach your little chefs some simple dishes that they can make for themselves. Your child could be next master chef who knows?  
  
If you want to get creative and need a little help, there are plenty of online sources that offer cooking classes and if you're confident in your skills, start your own online account and help others learn as well.
- L. Learn a new language:** Knowing a secondary or tertiary language can be really beneficial. It will open up new horizons for your kids. With the online world being just a touch away, learning a new language has never been this easy. There are plenty of apps online that teach new languages and are designed in the form of a game so that your children can have fun while learning.
- M. Meditation:** *Dr. Bryan Bruno, Founder and Medical Director at Mid City TMS explain, "Meditation is one of the healthiest activities that a parent can do with their child. Meditation affects different parts of the brain, including the parietal lobe. Activity in the parietal lobe slows down during meditation, and children are able to process information more clearly."*

Andrea Gurney, Licensed Clinical Psychologist, states "Kids who practice meditation and mindfulness reap a host of benefits, including but not limited to increased focus, self-control, coping strategies, emotional regulation, and better relationships."

#### These Changes Include:

- Kids feel calmer and can control their emotions better
- Kids have an increased emotional capacity to deal with stressful events
- Behaviour is improved
- Lower levels of depression and anxiety
- Improved memory
- N. News Reading:** There is a separate section for the kids at one page of newspaper where Sudoku, puzzles, riddles, tongue twister etc are published. These type of mind games helps in improving the vocabulary skills of children. Newspaper reading enhances the vocabulary of students. It is important for students, as early as Kindergarten, to start learning to read and gather information from newspaper. They help students develop daily reading habits that will last their entire lives. Studies have shown that students who learn using newspapers become more active citizens as adults.<sup>10</sup>
- O. Online Activity Classes enrollment:** Take time and try to understand the interest and hobbies of your kids. Accordingly, you can enroll them in different activity e-classes such as General Knowledge, Art and Craft, music classes, etc. Give them a specific fun task to do to base on what they have learnt in the activity class. This will help to channelize their energy while doing something creative and productive. You can also subscribe to an audio app for children like Audible, where children stories are shared in a fun and engaging way. They can even dance to their favourite songs or take up physical activity e-classes to keep their bodies active. Help your child pick a hobby in which he/she is genuinely interested.
- P. Picture Stories:** Orbis Pictus from 1658 by John Amos Comenius was the earliest illustrated book specifically for children. It is something of a children's encyclopedia and is illustrated by woodcuts. A Little Pretty Pocket-Book from 1744 by John Newbery was the earliest illustrated

storybook marketed as pleasure reading in English. For young readers, picture books are an important part of learning how to read. The rhythm and rhyme of picture books makes them easy to understand and fun to read aloud, allowing children to learn words quickly.<sup>11</sup>

- Q. Quilling:** Quilling is the art of rolled, shaped, and glued paper that results in creating a unified, decorative design. The name quilling is thought to come from the origin of the art; birds' feathers, or quills, were used to coil the strips of paper around. Quilling is also a great craft for kids as it teaches them fine motor skills and is a great craft to train their hand-eye coordination.<sup>12</sup>
- R. Riddles:** Young minds need to be fostered with something that gives them an opportunity to think over. Children are the buds in which we can instill our hopes for a great future. They are the ones that will make the world a better place to live in. Riddles for kids are the best form of solutions that helps to enhance their vocabulary. When you are sharing and solving riddles with children, it gives them an opportunity to bond with you and stay connected. Also, it helps them to break out of their comfort zone and mingle with others.
- Riddles can help children form associations, link ideas and think, be creative and make conclusions; all of which are good ways of learning and remembering things quickly and with ease.<sup>13</sup>
- S. Story Telling:** Storytelling is used as a tool to teach children the importance of respect through the practice of listening. As well as connecting children with their environment, through the theme of the stories, and give them more autonomy by using repetitive statements, which improve their learning to learn competence. Vocabulary, comprehension, sequencing, memory and creative writing are all benefits from storytelling.<sup>14,15</sup>
- T. Treasure Hunt:** Hide a certain treasure in the house something that your kid will enjoy upon unearthing and lay out some clues to the hidden treasure. It would not only help you and your kid to pass the time during this period of quarantine but will also give you an opportunity to spend some quality moments together. Needless to say, the whole process of searching for clues will sharpen the mental faculties of the kids and help them grow.

Treasure Hunt play is essential to the healthy development of children; play helps them discover and explore, solve problems, test new ideas and experience friendship, cooperation and teamwork.<sup>16</sup>

- U. Understanding of the situation:** It is very important to explain the current situation to the children. They should understand the need of the lockdown. Parents should explain them what all precautions has to be taken by each of us during this situation. Try to solve the quarries arises in their mind.
- V. Video call with relatives:** Video conferencing helps to improve communication and re-establish relationships. During a video conference you get to see the body language and facial expressions of the participants. This leads to a more effective and faster collaboration. Modern technology provides new options to stay involved with your family. Video calling is now one of the most effective ways of staying in touch, and making these calls isn't a task that should be overlooked. In fact, it is absolutely vital that you find a way to stay connected.<sup>17</sup>
- W. Writing the experience/letter:** Online messengers and chat rooms may be the popular mode of communication these days, but nothing beats the charm of a letter. Besides serving as excellent memory archives and having great sentimental value, letters are great for teaching the art of penmanship to your young ones. Letters force the writer to be concise and clear and therefore, improve the thought process and help in developing clear thinking skills. Tell your kids to write their experiences or give them any theme to write.
- X. X-mas tree making and decoration:** Santaclaus is a favorite character of kids .Ask them to prepare the Christmas tree and decorate it. They would love it. Provide them all necessary things for decoration sometimes many things are available at home only.
- Y. Yoga:** One of the easiest and healthiest things you can do with your kids is to make them practice Yoga daily. The age-old discipline is great for improving overall health and keeps the energy levels high a necessity during these times!

It is also a great opportunity to teach your children the importance of having good health. If they learn to follow the discipline young, they will stay healthy all their lives.

**Z. Zumba dance:** Zumba Jr. is a great way for kids to have a good time while learning to exercise for an hour. They get a great workout in, meet some fun new friends and learn some hot dance moves while listening to various cultural music artists. Zumba is really fun way to spend quality time together as per the The National Association for Sport and Physical Education. There are so many benefits of zumba for kids.

- Improved Endurance
- Better Body Coordination, Gross Motor Skills & Control Over Their Body
- Teaches kids to incorporate fitness as a natural part of their lives
- Promotes an overall healthier lifestyle
- Develop teamwork respect confidence and cultural awareness

#### **Parents can encourage creativity of children by**

**Teach them life skills:** The most important thing is that now is a really good time to teach children things you want to be done. Not all lessons need to be academic – they can be life lessons we want our children to learn as well. Even how they should fold their clothes, mop up or vacuum. Take an hour out and show them how you want them to do it. Usually, life is very fast, and we have no time for this type of teaching. But they are invaluable skills.

**Enjoy family time:** In the evening, there should be family time. So everyone's devices go away, every household with children can now guarantee there is going to be family time.

**Try and limit screen time:** Research has linked screen time with an increased amount of sedentary behavior in children and teens. It is your job to encourage healthy behaviors and limit unhealthy ones sometimes this means making unpopular decisions like limiting your children's screen time. Let's get them reading books, drawing on toilet rolls, cooking, in the garden building things because they can't be the generation that's in front of screens learning, otherwise it will have a huge effect on them.

**Proper and regular communication with kids** can help them in understanding what is expected out of them during your work hours.

**Encourage them to play independently:** Train your children to be independent so that they are not always looking for you or someone else to accompany them at all times. This will make them confident and will also allow you to focus better on work. Focus on quality rather than quantity when it comes to spending time with our child. With clear communication and understanding, plan his/her activities for the day or the week.

**Share the responsibility:** We need to jointly plan and give them that sense of responsibility. It's quite powerful for them to take control of what they'd like to do. And if that's being in their room drawing, then give them that time, make them exhausted from doing that, because they will get bored very soon. And when they want to do other things, that are where, as a parent, you've already got all these resources and ideas ready to go.

**Be Patient and Co-operative:** There are going to be interesting, diverse scenarios taking place in homes at the moment. Don't get exhausted but calm and quite. Just remember that your children are transitioning as well. We need to use lots of conciliation and give and take. Every parent is concerned because we are taking up a new role here, which we have never had to do before. The positive thing is, we are going to get to know our children more<sup>8,9</sup>.

Quarantine doesn't have to mean boredom. There are plenty of activities that you can organize for your children which will not only keep them from getting bored but will also help them grow.

Stay positive, productive and proactive!

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