

THINGS CHILDREN OF ALL AGES LIKE TO DO

University of Toronto Early Learning Centre

GO FOR A WALK!

While March in Canada doesn't bring predictable weather even at the best of times, try to go out for a walk in your neighbourhood, even if it's just for some fresh air, a change of scenery and some Vitamin D (When there's sun). You can play "I Spy", Letter hunts, even a bit of a treasure hunt: 1 green car, 2 stops signs, 3 garbage cans... And while the little guys may need to hitch a ride in the stroller, really encourage those walkers to walk. It's okay if they aren't fast or need to stop and look at something... you've got time.

OBSTACLE COURSE!

Inside or outside you can put together an obstacle course using some pretty simple items: big boxes, step stools, hula hoops, pool noodles, soccer balls, skipping ropes. Let your children help build, see which ideas work and which ones don't. Use a timer and record their best scores. Crepe paper streamers left over from birthday parties can add a fun element, either as a finish line or a barrier to crawl under and through without ripping. This [website](#) provides additional ideas for materials and actions.

HOT & COLD!

Remember this from your childhood? Try hiding a timer and give Hot/Cold directions to find it before the timer goes off. For those littler hunters having a timer that chirps or rings intermittently can actually make the game a little easier, and exciting, which will sustain their interest a bit longer.

EXERCISE!

With schools closed, many playgrounds, soccer fields, tracks (at those high schools) are empty. While you still need to exercise proper precautions (don't forget your hand sanitizer and maybe have your children wear gloves), just being around people, even when they aren't close to you, feels a little less isolating. Bring your bikes, remote control cars, scooters, soccer ball, drones, etc. There are also many online resources for children's yoga. Here is the yoga version of [Going On a Bear Hunt](#).

MAKE MOVIES!

We're not talking Hollywood-level blockbusters with stunts and special effects, but movies of dancing, science experiments, learning to ride a bike... it'll all be fun to re-watch later. Dig out puppets or make your own, get costumes and props, use their toy animals to create a story, sing songs to make your own music videos. The sillier the better. [Click here](#) for inspiration to get started

GET CRAFTY!

Drawing pictures can only sustain their attention for so long, but collect up shoe boxes (and other recyclables) and wrapping paper, and those little odds and ends in your junk drawer and you can put together some pretty awesome doll houses/schools/etc. Whether it's their toy animals and people, Lego & Mobilo figures, action figures, or people you make out of clothes pins, they keep busy not only creating but playing with it all later.

HOPSCOTCH!

Great for toddlers all the way up (sorry parents, you'll actually probably find all the hopping a lot harder than it was when you were young). Draw it on with chalk outside or even in your garage or on your balcony and unfinished basements, tape it on with painters tape indoors. Just watch out for socks on slippery surfaces. It can be as big or small as you need, 5 squares to a million.

READ BOOKS!

Remember those story tapes? When you'd turn the page when you heard the chime? Try recording some of your kids favourite stories for/with them on your iPad or phone. You can put on all kinds of voices, record with or without the photos in the books, let your child be the one to signal when to turn the page. It's not only a fun activity with them, but for them to use later. [StoryJumper](#) allows you and your child to create a digital book. Be sure to follow your favourite authors on social media. Some of your favourites are broadcasting live reading events or live doodles!

[Peter H. Reynolds](#)
[Mo Williams](#)
[Oliver Jeffers](#)

Even Olaf (aka @JoshGad) is reading to children every night.

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PHOTO ALBUMS & SCRAP BOOKS!

If you have a drawer full of photos that you have been meaning to organize, not is the time. And there is NOTHING kids love better than pictures of themselves. If you have the albums or scrapbooks waiting, now's the time to get started. Have a million pictures on your devices but nothing printed? Pull out your old family albums to flip through. Not only will your children love seeing old pictures (and asking questions), but you might find some inspiration buried in those photos of things you enjoyed doing at their age... before Netflix and Tablets came along. Share photos with relatives via facetime to hear different perspectives on the same event.

PARTY GAMES!

Dig deep into your childhood memories and start pulling out all your favourite birthday party games: Pin the tail on the Donkey, Pinata, beanbag toss (balled-up socks will work just as well), target practice (clean cans from the recycling and those sock balls again).

PLAYING ALONE

We also realize when working from home, it can be difficult to constantly feel the need to entertain and teach your child. Be patient, it is a skill and it takes time for children to learn how to play independently.

YARD WORK & PLANTING!

As unpredictable as the weather can be, if you have a yard, a garden, or planter box you can get to work cleaning them up and getting them ready for Spring planting (just remember we will still likely be getting snow in the coming weeks). But if you have everything ready to go you can start some seedlings. Can't get to a gardening centre right now? No problem! Tomato, pepper & cucumber seeds are all probably available in your fridge right now, just save them when you make lunch or dinner and use them. You can even regrow carrots by planting the tops, and celery, lettuce and onions by cutting the bottoms off the plant.

OLD FAVOURITES!

We sometimes feel obligated to schedule every moment of our child's day, especially when they are young or an only child. Puzzles, books and blocks are great for downtime when you actually are working from home, but don't overlook the value of blanket tents, a big box, paper airplanes, music, and most importantly, sticking to a routine/schedule.

[Infant Routines](#)

[Importance of Routines for Children](#)

SPRING CLEANING!

Now is a good time to put those kids to work! Start emptying out toy boxes, closets, storage rooms, dressers... There are a lot of treasures you have probably forgotten about like board games, puzzles, those photo albums we mentioned, sports equipment. And unlike when you are trying to find a weekend to get it done, now you have a bit more time. And because your kids never stop growing, sort through their drawers and closes with them to clear out things that don't fit anymore. Even those bins of hand-me-downs someone gave you, dig through and see if what's in them is actually going to fit your child at the appropriate time. Hint: a snowsuit that fits probably won't next November.

Household chores? [Here](#) is an article with tips and ideas for age appropriate chores,

COOK TOGETHER!

With the potential of extra time in your day, include your child in meal prep. These articles provide both recipes and age appropriate tasks young children can help with.

[Recipes for Toddlers](#)

[Cooking with Preschoolers](#)