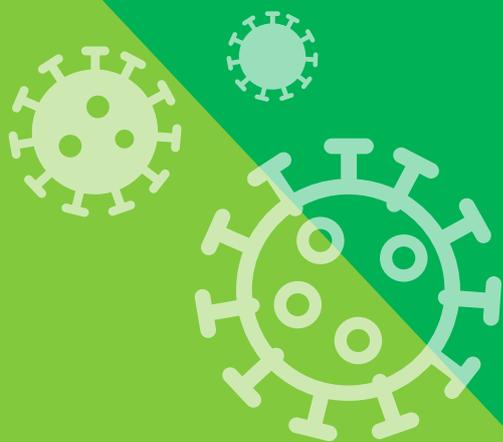


Supporting Families to Help Children Learn and Develop at Home

Tips and resources during **COVID-19**



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION

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Challenge: Our New Reality

The COVID-19 has affected all aspects of our lives. By now we all know that self-isolation and physical distancing are key strategies in “flattening the curve” of new coronavirus infections. As a result, we now have little to no physical contact with others outside of our homes. We understand that for parents and caregivers, it is difficult to transition into a world where our usual employment and modes of work are no longer available. We now need to work, look after the health and wellbeing of our family, and help our children continue to learn outside of school.

We know that meeting the demands and expectations of supporting our children to ‘learn at home’ can be overwhelming. Whether it is receiving new instructions from teachers or navigating hundreds of online resources, it has become stressful and tiring for many caregivers to adopt and adapt available materials for what could really work for children within their own homes.

Recommendations: Our Support for Families

We thank and applaud families for what they are already doing at this difficult time and do not want to add to the noise, but rather provided a small note of **reassurance, support, and synthesis of available resources** for parents and caregivers as they adjust to these challenging new times. We hope that these resources will help you to respond to the needs of parents and caregivers in your context. These resources can be translated, adapted and contextualized for potential use by AKDN staff, partners, families and communities we support.

1.Reassurance

We want to reaffirm your special role as a family member in the home during this uncertain time. Most of all, we know that your children appreciate being close to their loved ones and having a caring environment in which they feel safe, cherished and valued. We thank you for being the person that provides security, stability, care and love for your children during this difficult time. This is the most important role that parents and family members can play for their children.

2.Support

We want you to feel supported and not alone as you begin to navigate these uncharted pathways ahead. We have gathered **12 tips** to help you begin to think about ways to support your children to continue to learn and develop over the coming weeks ahead. But we also want to reassure you that there is no right or wrong answer. You know your children best and know what will work for them. So, follow your best instincts and trust yourself.

- 1. Take your time:** You do not need to start helping your children to 'learn from home' from day one or even within the first week. For school-age children, your children's school may give you some guidance, but it is okay (and recommended) to take time to adjust and prepare your home and your children to understand that it is not a school break and that they will need to continue learning in a new environment. Cleaning one's rooms and setting up 'learning' and 'working' spaces is crucial for establishing new ways of learning together.
- 2. Progress not perfection:** After preparing a new plan to best support your children's learning at home, you may discover that your best intentions do not really go as planned. This is fine. Be kind to yourself during this time of 'trial and error' and remember that there is no ready-made roadmap to address the many challenges ahead. Everyone is in this together.
- 3. Accept a new pace:** You do not need to become a fulltime teacher or try to cover an entire curriculum while your children are out of school. During school days in most places around the world, children are not focused on academics for the whole day. There is a lot of time used in a school day for transitions, organizing children, and having meals together. Whether the school sends home learning activities or not, your most important role right now is to help children feel comfortable in their new 'homemade classrooms' and help them discover and engage in learning activities that they love and enjoy. This requires accepting a new pace of learning for our children and remaining patient with yourselves in understanding your new emerging roles as facilitators and supporters of learning and development.
- 4. Create a daily routine as a family:** During times of crisis, one of the major stressors felt by all individuals is the disruption of daily routines and the fear of the unknown. Children especially need a daily routine that is flexible, but consistent so that they can focus and transition easily from one activity to the next. Such a routine should contain time for revision or new learning, physical activity, leisure (cooking and playing games), family time and rest (including bedtimes and naps). Becoming comfortable with a new daily routine can take a few weeks or more. This is fine. It is important that the daily routine is co-developed with all family members and is seen as a 'work-in-progress' that can always improve over time, together. It is also a good idea to talk to your older children about their independent learning and how they want you to support their learning while at home.
- 5. Be mindful of attention spans:** Older children can focus on an activity for about 45 minutes or more. Younger children (pre-primary to early primary age) can often engage in learning activities for no more than 20 to 30 minutes. Babies and toddlers may focus on an activity for 5-10 minutes. Being respectful of children's needs requires being respectful to yourselves. If you are working remotely, kindly request your colleagues to consider shorter virtual meetings to enable you to support your children during their hours of attentive learning. Remember even adults need quiet intervals and if possible their own space. This will take time to manage and negotiate; that is okay! Be patient and know that everyone is in a process of adjustment.
- 6. Get daily fresh air:** Where possible, remember to find that moment of breathing in the fresh air as a family. Take walks or just play outside. Fresh air and sunshine can clear the mind and you can de-stress and relax together. Also, as we all know, sunshine is critical for Vitamin D which is important for our health. If your family is unable to leave your home, open the doors and windows to let the fresh air inside.

- 7. Keep exercising:** Physical movement and exercise is so important to keep the immune system strong and ensure overall proper health. Taking at least 30 minutes a day to get some sort of exercise is an amazing gift to your bodies and your overall family happiness. It allows for a complete break from electronics, the news, and the pressures of the day. Some type of aerobic exercise will help you and your family members de-stress, gain a renewed positive spirit, and feel you have accomplished something in the day. Whether it is walking, dancing, or beginning a new fitness routine as a family, this will really help improve everyone's wellbeing.
- 8. Take time as parents for yourselves:** Many parents and children are home all day. It can be hard to juggle household chores, work responsibilities with childcare, and learning activities; all in close proximity with others. Even if it is for 30 minutes, it is important for each parent or caretaker to take time, daily, for themselves and relax. Reach out to your friends, talk to your family members and consider starting or participating in new parenting social circles. And don't forget to eat, yourselves, as it is sometimes easy to miss a meal during these busy days!
- 9. Limit screen time:** If electronics and internet are available, it may be difficult to limit children's screen time. But it's important to try to do so. If children need the electronics for their schoolwork, allow it. They can also use electronics to chat with friends, family, and play games with themselves and others. If they are watching a movie or television show, it may be helpful to ask a few questions and integrate the stories from what they are watching into your offline conversations and activities throughout the day. However, it is important that children, especially younger ones, are not on screens for most of the day. It is not good for their health and development (i.e. eyesight, ability to sleep and brain development). Younger children especially need social interaction with others (siblings or parents) for their overall brain development and personal well-being. It is also critical that parents keep a watchful eye on the content of the sites and the social media channels their children are accessing.
- 10. Children are learning all the time:** "Less is more" when it comes to introducing new learning activities with children and young people. If something can be simplified, simplify it. Children learn from everything in their environments. It might not be what is taught in school, but they will be learning important lessons from this experience. Remember that being at home may be an opportunity for students to learn new things in new ways that they wouldn't otherwise be able to within a formal classroom environment. Developing independence is important, so it is wonderful to invite your children to learn and play on their own as well. As a caregiver, you can also model how to be flexible, patient, kind and creative during these difficult times.
- 11. Talk about COVID-19:** It is important to talk to your children about COVID-19. Give them space to tell you what they already know or have heard from others on the news or from their friends. Be honest and respond to their questions as best as you can. If you do not know the answer, that's okay. If you need content about COVID-19 for younger children, we have provided a link to new children's books and other resources about COVID-19 in the attached resource bank. It is also very important for you and your children to take a break from constantly checking the news and build 'COVID-19 free' time into your routines.
- 12. Learning to be grateful together:** When people are going through hard times, one thing that can help them feel better is learning to be grateful for what they have rather than fixating about what they do not have. Children can be encouraged to focus on the positive by writing (or drawing) about things they are grateful for and doing something kind for each member of the family at least once a day. Parents can also do this for their children. These moments can help remind us to celebrate, love, and enjoy one another during this difficult time. After all, learning to be grateful together may be one of the greatest lessons of all.

3.Synthesis of Learning Resources

Global resources: Over the last few weeks, many organisations working in education and early childhood development have provided new 'distance learning' resources for families to use in response to COVID-19. We have provided links to **10 websites** that you can access in the Annex.

Online resources: We understand, though, that it might be overwhelming for parents and caregivers to sift through the various sites and find useful, free, and engaging content. Therefore, we compiled a 'short list' of **35 online learning resources** in the Annex that are practical, curated, and hopefully fun for you to use. The list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive, but is a start for families in need of some new ideas and have limited time to search through websites.

Offline resources: We also understand that many families in many of our contexts do not have access to reliable Internet at home. Furthermore, many of the online resources are not in the languages of our respective contexts. Therefore, we have also provided **25 tips for offline learning activities** in the Annex that can be done with family and regular items around the house.

We hope that the provided resources will be helpful to you and your families in the weeks ahead and look forward to working with country-level AKDN partners to generate more context-specific tips, activities, and resources over time.

Recommendations: Support to Programmes

As part of the AKDN COVID-19 response plan, we have provided the following list of optional actions and platforms that country units and COVID-19 National Task Force groups could consider using in the weeks ahead:

- **Align with Government Priorities:** If your country's Ministry of Education has issued guidance or support for families about how they can support children learning at home, follow that guidance and only use the ideas and resources from this resource packet that you think will complement the government and other partners efforts in your context.
- **Translate Available Resources:** Adapt and translate the above recommendations for parents and caregivers to ensure that the language is culturally and contextually appropriate and relevant for staff, partners, and local communities.
- **Context Matters:** Review the recommended synthesis of available resources in the Annex; only include the resources that are contextually relevant and appropriate for your context, being aware that some of the available resources require reliable Internet.
- **Identify Local Strategies that Work:** Include any other home learning resources that are already available and working in your country context. Collect local strategies from local AKDN agencies, government partners or other reliable sources, including local families, teachers, and students, themselves.
- **Disseminate in Your Context:** Consider conducting webinars that can be recorded to disseminate these tips, recommendations and resources, especially in the languages that are mostly used in your context. The recorded webinar (or parts of it) could then be distributed via WhatsApp, Facebook or other low-cost media channels.

- **Use Radio and TV for Sharing Messages:** If the Internet is not reliable in your country for community members, consider disseminating some of these tips or resources through local radio or TV stations. Partnering with the government in disseminating these resources via radio and/or TV can also be a good way to show the government our commitment to responding to the COVID-19 crisis and support their strategic response.
- **Leverage Existing Social Networks:** If your programmes have existing parenting groups or education communities of practice that use texting, WhatsApp or other social media, these networks can be great ways to disseminate tips and resources for families.
- **Simplify Messaging by Using Available Slide Decks:** Consider using the two supplemental 'Power Point' slide decks for the **12 Tips** and **Annex of 75 Suggested Learning Resources** when sending messages. They are easier to absorb and read.
- **Share Resources in Phases:** Consider sending the learning resources in phases so parents don't feel overwhelmed with receiving too many resources at once.

How We Can Help

For any questions, please contact our focal points for ECD and Education in the AKF Global Programme Team: **Dr. Sweta Shah** (sweta.shah@akdn.org), **Nafisa Shekhova** (nafisa.shekhova@kdn.org) or **Dr. Andrew Cunningham** (andrew.cunningham@akdn.org).

ANNEX

Suggested Activities and Resources for Learning at Home with Children

Offline & online ideas during **COVID-19**

PART I - 25 Offline Learning Activities & Resources

FAMILY TIME TOGETHER – LEARN TO BE GRATEFUL FOR ONE ANOTHER

- 1. Plan surprise acts of kindness together:** Encourage your child to plan one, secrete positive surprise act of kindness for another person in the family throughout the week. Ask them to do so without being discovered immediately and then enjoy the reaction to the kindness.
- 2. Connect and learn from relatives together:** Invite your child to interview older relatives or neighbors (maybe by phone) to describe what they remember about growing up when they were the same age as your child. Encourage children to make a book, a drawing, or even a play to share these memories with others.
- 3. Make and send 'I Appreciate You' notes together:** Encourage children to write a hand-drawn picture or note to family relatives, neighbors, or others that do not live with you. If possible, invite children to send the note/drawing via a WhatsApp photo, text message, Facebook, regular mail or E-mail; it can help increase positive spirits for those living alone.
- 4. Cook meals together:** Invite children to help prepare a meal over the course of the day is one of the best times to spend together; especially learning new recipes, how to take responsibility, and collaborate with others. Cooking is also a great Math activity where children of all ages can learn about measurement items and sequencing.
- 5. Explore family members' personal goals together:** What is one personal goal that your child hopes to complete this next year? In what ways could others in your family help your child's efforts? Offer the same question about yourself; ask your child how they can help you, too.

FUN ACTIVITIES IN THE HOUSE - PROMOTE LEARNING IN MATH, LITERACY AND MORE

- 6. Create 'obstacle courses' and 'homemade forts' for kids (and adults):** Encourage kids to co-create an indoor obstacle course using household items, designing different 'learning' and 'doing' stations along the way. These could be academic challenges such as singing math facts or writing a special poem; but could also require kids to crawl under chairs or walk throughout the house like an imaginary animal. Here is a gallery of [homemade forts](#) with blankets and pillows as inspiration. Here is a video about one parent's [indoor obstacle course](#). Think about what you can use in your own house to make your own! Kids will love it.

7. **Host family 'treasure' hunts throughout the house:** Create written or spoken clues for your children to search for various items in the house leading to an ultimate 'treasure'. Children can also create treasure hunts for other family members, and helps with their writing. Click [here](#) for a sample. Other ideas can be found [here](#) such as 'Math Hunts' or 'Shape Hunts'.
8. **Play 'I Spy' Games Looking Out the Window or While On Daily Walks:** Play 'I Spy' with kids when looking around your home or outside about things related to various subjects. Think about things that children don't usually get to see or do in school to learn about items related to math, science or other subject areas. Talking through these connections can be very powerful. Click [here](#) for ten different ways to play 'I Spy' as an inspiration.
9. **Create a Family Word Jar for New Vocabulary:** When you read or tell stories together, write down new vocabulary words on pieces of paper and place them in a Family Word Jar (FWJ). Return to the FWJ at dinner, or other times throughout the day and pick out a word to practice more together. Have fun making phrases or sentences with it together as a family.
10. **Host Homemade Puppet Shows:** Use old socks or other items around the house and create puppet theatres. See [here](#) for a variety of ways to build homemade puppet theatres and encourage children to prepare sets, costumes, and even songs to perform for the family.
11. **Encourage Children to be Journalists:** Interview grandparents, parents and friends (over the phone if not in the same place) about their day or their experience with COVID-19 and write an article and/or ask them to present it as a news briefing for the family.
12. **Make Stories Together:** Make a story with, 'Today we're going on a picnic, and we're going to bring ___'. Family members can use different words with the entire alphabet (i.e. I'm going to bring an Apple, Banana, Carrot, etc.). Change the topic each day, 'Today we're going fishing...'. Click [here](#) for suggested ways to play this game together.
13. **Sing Together and Learn New Songs:** Explore and share new songs together as a family.
14. **Engage in 'side-by-side play' together:** Play card games, draw, build blocks, color, paint, play tick-tack-toe, play hangman, or even start a 'multiple artist drawing' where each family member has two minutes each to complete a 10-minute drawing through multiple turns.
15. **Play 'Stop and Go Games' together:** Iterate the "Red Light, Green Light" game where children 'freeze' in motion (Red Light) and then are instructed to move in fun ways (Green Light) such as walking like a chicken. Feel free to rotate between children and adults leading the game; Click [here](#) for ideas of a number of variations.
16. **Play 'Simon Says' together:** Host a family-style 'Simon Says' games, rotating family members calling out different fun directions. Click [here](#) for 101 ideas of what to say. You can of course replace Simon with another name. This game can be played in different languages to promote the learning of other languages.
17. **Play new hand-clapping games together:** After washing your hands, encourage children to learn new handclapping games for different aged kids. Click here for two clapping ideas: [Tic Tac Toe](#) and a game called [Sevens](#). Encourage your kids to make their own and teach you!
18. **Build new creations with materials at home:** Using LEGO, blocks or materials you would recycle (i.e. boxes, milk containers), create new cities, houses, or musical instruments. Invite children to create stories with what they build - see [here](#) for an example. Click [here](#) for five more simple ideas to help the whole family find a playful moment of learning with normal items around the house. Also if you have LEGO blocks, check out their website, [#letsbuildtogether](#), to find fun building ideas from students and designers around the world.

19. **Play 'pretend store/market/restaurant' in your house:** Pretend your home is a store or market and add price tags to various items. Turn your regular dinner time into a restaurant and encourage your children to be the waiters/waitresses (and vice versa). Design fun menus with prices. Rotate the roles of you, as the caretaker, being the shopkeeper, customer or waiter. To deepen learning for an older child in this game, invite them to create a marketing plan or investment pitch for the store/restaurant/market to present to the family.
20. **Play card games that are kid-friendly:** With a standard 52 card deck, learn to play new card games with kids. Click [here](#) for 10 card game ideas for kids and families with easy instructions.
21. **Design and fly paper airplanes:** With any paper around the house, learn to fly together and see which plane goes the furthest and fastest! Click [here](#) for 45 paper airplane designs.
22. **Create fun paper hats and play dress up:** Use paper plates for kids to create special fun hats. See all sorts of hat designs [here](#). Perhaps also play dress up with clothes from adults for fun.
23. **Make your own dice and play new games:** Use existing dice or learn to make your own with paper (click [here](#) or [here](#) for two videos that can guide you). Click [here](#) for a list of 10 dice games for kids of all ages.
24. **Move, dance and exercise together!** Encourage family members to share their own fitness routines together and have fun! Even 20 minutes a day makes a huge difference. Click [here](#) for available exercise plans for children of all ages.
25. **Co-create a daily family routines:** Create agendas with children and young people to ensure co-ownership. Click [here](#) some sample flexible, weekly learning routines for families to use as inspiration from Save the Children for kids aged 0-6, Kindergarten to Grade 1, and Grade 2 to Grade 6. Also consider looking at a sample of learning materials organized by weekly schedules for children in grades K-5 at 'Hand2Mind at Home' by clicking [here](#).

PART II - 35 Online Learning Activities & Resources

LEARNING ACROSS MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

1. **Khan Academy:** An online resource for independent learning for all kids. Click [here](#).
2. **Scholastic Learning:** Project-based, week-long learning units for grades K-9. Click [here](#).
3. **Wonderopolis:** Daily lessons of fun, 'child wonder topics' to explore. Click [here](#).
4. **PBS Learning Media:** Curated daily, subject-specific, age appropriate materials. Click [here](#).
5. **YouTube 'Learn at Home':** Curated channels for interactive learning videos. Click [here](#).
6. **YouTube 'PLAY' Series:** 3-minute videos of games to play at home with kids. Click [here](#).
7. **Kahoot!:** Create a game show at home with custom or pre-made trivia questions. Click [here](#).
8. **Zero to Three:** Home-based play activities for children aged 12 to 24 months. Click [here](#).
9. **Vroom:** Science-based app providing practical tips for caregivers of children. Click [here](#).

LEARNING MATHEMATICS

10. **BedTime Math:** Daily, funny, 5-min math word problems for kids of all ages. Click [here](#).
11. **Erikson Early Math:** Math-based learning games for kids in early years. Click [here](#).
12. **Omnicalculator:** 1032 custom calculators to use math in the real world. Click [here](#).
13. **Photomath:** An app to take photos of math problems and receive assistance. Click [here](#).
14. **TeachBanzai:** Facilitates students to learn financial literacy for all aged children. Click [here](#).

LEARNING THROUGH READING

15. **Epic:** 40,000 books for children under 12 years old. Limited time for free access. Click [here](#).
16. **Audible Stories:** Access to 1000s of 'read-aloud' stories from Amazon for all. Click [here](#).
17. **Global Digital Library:** Access to free digital books in 48 languages. Click [here](#).
18. **Antura and Letters:** Global app to learn to read; available in 25 languages. Click [here](#).
19. **YouTube 'KidTimeStoryTime':** Curated 'read aloud' children's books in all topics. Click [here](#).
20. **Story Time from Space:** Listen to astronauts reading books from space. Click [here](#).
21. **World Reader:** Storybooks for your mobile device (start with 75 free ones). Click [here](#).
22. **Story Weaver:** Storybooks for children in different languages. Click [here](#).
23. **African Story Book:** Access storybooks in African languages, 700+ in Kiswahili. Click [here](#).

LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE

24. **Duolingo:** Learn a foreign language through an interactive, downloadable app. Click [here](#).
25. **CommonSenseMedia:** Curated list of 33 sites/apps to learn a foreign language. Click [here](#).

LEARNING ABOUT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

26. **Nasa Kids Club:** A range of STEM resources related to science and space for kids. Click [here](#).
27. **MosaMackScience:** Kids' science/engineering challenges for kids aged 9 to 13. Click [here](#).
28. **Coding:** Explore how to code at either Code.org (click [here](#)) or Code Academy (click [here](#)).
29. **TypingClub:** Encourage children and young people to learn and master typing. Click [here](#).

LEARNING THROUGH EXERCISE, PLAY AND EXPLORATION

30. **GoNoodle:** A suite of online, fun exercise videos for kids, developed by experts. Click [here](#).
31. **Playworks:** A helpful list of children's physical activities for use within indoors. Click [here](#).
32. **YoReMi:** A site with yoga activities for kids, now free during the COVID-19 crisis. Click [here](#).
33. **ChessKid:** Learn how to play chess and play with kids around the world. Click [here](#).
34. **FiveMinuteMum:** Curated list of 5-minute activities kids can do at home for fun. Click [here](#).
35. **Virtual Museums:** Explore 12 virtual museums that match children's interests. Click [here](#).

PART III - 5 Resources to Talk about COVID-19 with Children

1. **#COVIBOOK:** Downloadable children's book about COVID-19 in many languages. Click [here](#).
2. **Red Cross:** A list of advice and resources for speaking to children about COVID-19. Click [here](#).
3. **World Health Organization:** Curated site of videos about aspects of COVID-19. Click [here](#).
4. **WhatsApp Facts:** Interactive app with facts about COVID-19 from the WHO. Click [here](#).
5. **YouTube Baby Shark Song for Handwashing:** Kids' video for hand washing. Click [here](#).

PART IV - 10 Websites for Updated New Learning Materials

1. **UNESCO:** Repository offline/online learning websites during school closures. Click [here](#).
2. **INEE:** Repository of offline/online resources for education in emergencies. Click [here](#).
3. **UNICEF:** Resources about responses to COVID-19 (click [here](#)) and online safety (click [here](#)).
4. **Save the Children:** Resources for families to help children learn at home. Click [here](#).
5. **World Bank:** Repository of resources for supporting children learning at home. Click [here](#).
6. **Forbes Magazine:** 101 ideas for supporting children's learning at home. Click [here](#).
7. **We Are Teachers:** 1000+ learning at home resources listed by grade/subject. Click [here](#).
8. **Amazing Educators:** 1000+ crowdsourced ideas for learning during COVID-19. Click [here](#).
9. **Oxford University:** List of recommended home learning resources from the UK. Click [here](#).
10. **ECD Action Network:** List of resources for promoting early childhood development. Click [here](#).