

How to keep your kids engaged with play during COVID-19



Multilingual Families Lab conducted a survey on children's communication during COVID-19. **201 Anglophone, Francophone and Hispanophone** families answered our questionnaire. One challenge identified by parents and caregivers was support for their child's interaction with other children. We hope this material is helpful!



Foster an environment supportive of play

- **Make time**
Give your child opportunity for free play, guided play or organized games and activities.
- **Create space**
Play contributes to cognitive and motor development and skills including problem solving and reasoning
- **Play with your child**
Play comes more naturally to some children than others. Help develop your child's skills if it is challenging by being a role model.
- **Pay attention to your child's interests**
Types of play can change drastically as the child grows and interests change.
- **Encourage questions and creativity**
Let your child explore, exercise independence, and learn at their own pace.

We use play to make sense of the world around us and to understand our experiences

Play can promote resiliency, develop coping skills and regulate emotions



Build friendships

- **Organize virtual playdates and interactive games**
Peer relationships contribute to overall social and emotional development. Early positive friendships and relationship competency protect against negative experiences later in childhood.

Play with peers develops a number of essential skills. Making connections with others requires language & communication abilities, empathy, emotion expression, leadership & teamwork.



Peer environments allow for growth but situations can be challenging due to the fact that everyone learns at different rates.



Play during COVID-19

Keep your child active

- Try to keep them active - it boosts their immune system and helps reduce feelings of depression and anxiety which can arise from being isolated from their peers
- Play allows kids to feel they have some sort of control
- Try to plan activities that engage cognitive and literary skills (by playing board games or reading)

Incorporate the realities of the pandemic into pretend play

- Wearing masks and practicing "curbside delivery" when playing in their pretend restaurant

Acting as superheroes sent to save the world from the super-villain "Coronavirus"

Play can be therapeutic as it allows kids to deal with scary situations and resolve conflict in their pretend world that they would have a hard time processing in the real world.

Use technology to keep your kids active

- Since technology has become a huge part of our lives, not letting your kids use it becomes challenging but there are alternatives to keep kids mind engaged and keep them active.
- **Cosmic Kids Yoga:** Yoga sequenced to popular movies (**Frozen, Moana**) helps with relaxation while keeping their mind/bodies active
- **Fender Play:** An app that can teach them how to play the guitar/ukulele and can keep kids occupied while teaching them a new skill.

Sources:

<https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/UNICEF-Lego-Foundation-Learning-through-Play.pdf>
<http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/peer-relations/according-experts/early-peer-relations-and-their-impact-childrens-development>
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Do not forget that we are experiencing exceptional and challenging times, so if you or a member of your family needs help, do not hesitate to seek professional advice.

Visit our lab website to see other useful infographics and more!

<https://bilingualacquisition.ca/>

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