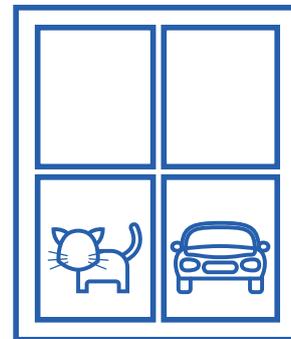


Playing when you cannot go outside your home



The coronavirus pandemic has created unusual and difficult experiences for children and families. One of these is not being able to go outside.

This can be especially difficult if you feel your home is crowded, or don't have much privacy from neighbours.

Feeling stressed or upset is completely understandable. It's important to look after yourself and to find ways to relax.

Here are some suggestions that might help.

- Remember your child doesn't need you to be the perfect parent. They need to know you love and care for them.
- If your child is playing happily it's fine to let them play while you rest and have some downtime.
- It's ok for your child to be bored sometimes. They don't need you to entertain them all the time.
- When you play with your child, try to forget about other concerns. Concentrate on enjoying playing with them.
- It's ok to say you've played enough, that you need a rest, or have to do something else.

Playing is a way of being connected to the world. Here are some suggestions of things you can play at home.

Games to play looking out of the window

- Count the number of cars or cats or people you can see.
- Make up stories about what you see. For example, what is the cat planning to do? What's their name? What would the world look like if you were the cat?
- Can you see the streetlights going on in the evening and off in the morning? Can you hear the moment the birds start to sing in the morning and settle down for the night?
- At night-time, look for stars and the moon, reflections and shadows, birds, bats and other wildlife moving around.

Always be very careful of your child's safety when they're near windows.

Bring some nature into your home

- Look around your home for things to play with made from natural materials - wooden spoons, wicker baskets, cotton, silk, pebbles or feathers.
- Try growing a small indoor garden in pots near a window. You could grow herbs to smell and taste, or seedlings for flowers.
- Try making an arty garden on a tray making trees, plants and birds from scrap materials like wrapping paper, tissue paper, sweet wrappers and cardboard.
- Learn to identify birds and insects using a book or looking online.

Try to stay active

It can be hard to keep physically active at home, but there are lots of benefits to using up energy – for example, improving your mood (and your child's) and sleeping better.

- Put on some music and dance – try funny dancing, slow motion, follow my leader or freestyle.
- Exercises – turn your room into a gym. Try some sit-ups, running on the spot or balancing on one leg. Ask your child to show you exercises they do at school.
- Rough and tumble play – play wrestling creates a burst of energy and fun. You can make things safer by moving breakable objects, or you can put a duvet on the floor.

Making space

Sometimes your child might need to play alone or prefer some privacy when they play. Equally, there will be times when you need some space too.

- Find some items to make a den or a tent. It can be as simple as putting a bed sheet over a table with the fabric hanging down the sides so your child can play underneath.
- A large cardboard box is a perfect plaything for children.
- Make a cosy corner or a squasy circle with a pile of pillows and cushions.
- Change the mood in a room by switching the main light off and playing in the dark, or just with the light from the street. Try making shadows with torches or a small lamp.
- Talk to your child and explain that you sometimes need a little bit of quiet and time on your own just like they do. Even if you can't be in different rooms, you can help your child learn that there are times when they should try to play quietly.

Other pages in the IPA series offer guidance and ideas for playing at home during the coronavirus pandemic. They include:

- play dealing with difficulty themes (death, loss and loneliness etc.)
- coping with noisy and messy play
- ideas for play around your home.



The *IPA play in crisis* series is designed to offer straightforward advice and suggestions to help you and your child keep playing through the coronavirus pandemic.