



Things to do with kids at home over the school holidays

School Holidays, confined at home and wondering what to do with the kids?

Here are some ideas.....

After months of remote learning, spending the school holidays in (at least partial) lockdown will be a challenge for even the most organized families. Many of the school-holiday stand-bys are closed for business, and many children are spending most of their waking hours inside or in the backyard. So, if you have kids to keep entertained, how do you fill in the seemingly endless hours ahead? Here are some (mostly) device-free options and new experiences to discover.

Things to do with the kids if you're stuck at home

Pack a picnic

Spring weather and easing restrictions put picnic season front of mind. Even if restrictions prevent you heading out to your usual favorite picnic spot, a backyard picnic or even a blanket spread out on the lounge room floor can help break the monotony. Spend the morning making some treats and packing a basket. If you are able to venture further than your own back yard, remember to wear a mask when not eating and keep 1.5 meters' distance at all times.



Ninja it

Take inspiration from TV show *Ninja Warrior* and get the kids moving through an improvised obstacle course. Use your local playground (they're open again) or set up in the backyard or indoors, using chairs as 'floating steps', swinging off tree branches or door frames, jumping over or limbo-ing under a tied rope, and adding skill tests like landing a ball in the wheelie bin. Time each run and crown your winner.



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Dig this

Spring is the perfect time to get kids into growing their own herbs, vegies and flowers. Many nurseries are open throughout the state, at least for delivery or click and collect, so you can order seeds, seedlings and any other garden supplies you need. Give the kids a garden plot to plant and look after, or pot up a planter box or even a big Milo tin (make nail holes in bottom for drainage) with hardy nasturtiums, poppy seeds, basil or lettuce seedlings. The Diggers Club's tomato expert says late September and early October are [ideal for planting tomatoes](#), so order some seedlings while you're at it. If you can't access a nursery, ask a neighbor for a geranium, rosemary or succulent cutting to repot, or [grow vegetables from scraps you would usually throw out](#). Or celebrate [Sunflower September](#) and order a pack of sunflower seeds as a symbol of hope, connectedness and solidarity. Proceeds from sales help fund playground equipment for disadvantaged schools.



Hallway bowling alley

Make a DIY bowling alley as a way to pass a few fun family hours. Line up some empty plastic bottles and use an old pair of socks wrapped into a ball to create a quick and easy game of indoor bowling. Make it harder by adding some weight, like sand and water, inside the bottles.

Kids on film ...

Make a movie. Children can write a script, put together costumes and design sets and then film using an iPhone or iPad. Send the result to grandparents to brighten their time in isolation. And if stop-motion is your kids' thing, you could sign them up for a [Lego Discovery Centre Filmmakers Holiday Camp](#). With three-hour sessions every day in the second week of the holidays, participants will learn story-telling, directing, framing and set-making skills via Zoom, along with guest sessions from TV's *Lego Masters* contestants. The camp costs \$249 per child, and the camp kit \$164.05.

... or revisit the classics

Hold a series of themed movie afternoons to revisit favorite films you might have missed from your kids' repertoire. Go local with Victorian-made favorites – *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Oddball* or *The Castle* – or head overseas to dreamy Hayao Miyazaki classics like *Ponyo*, *Kiki's Delivery Service* or *Howl's Moving Castle* (all available on Netflix). Get younger kids to make movie tickets, set up cinema seats and rustle up a bowl of microwave popcorn before you settle in.

...or revisit School show Episodes

Revisit episodes of Officer Specialist School Show <https://www.theschoolshow.com.au> that you might have missed.



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Get them cooking

Get creative with what's in the pantry. Use online apps for some recipe inspiration – some allow you to enter the ingredients you have to hand then suggest suitable recipes. Younger children can be your 'kitchen assistant' as you cook, grating cheese, peeling potatoes and setting the table.

Or watch <https://www.theschoolshow.com.au/cooking> with Gayle and Jo.



For the birds

Spotted some unusual feathered friends in your neighborhood lately? You can use Birdlife Australia's bird-finder tool to identify any you see in your backyard or neighborhood. And if your kids catch the birding bug they might like to take part in the [Aussie Backyard Bird Count](#) on 19 to 25 October. (More: [How to cultivate a bird-friendly garden.](#))

Brick by brick

If you have a mountain of old Lego tucked away, try setting up a table in your living or play area and challenging the kids to design and build a cubby house, rocket ship, unicorn, playground, car, dinosaur, mini city, spinning top, fairy land... You might find yourself joining in. [Melbourne's Legoland Discovery Centre](#) will have [free Boredom Busters](#) videos, worksheets and activities on its website and Facebook page, and parents can buy a Boredom Busters Builder's Kit with projects to build each day of the holidays. Kits cost \$89.95.

Post haste

Write a letter to a grandparent, aunty or friends overseas. Include photos or drawings, buy a stamp and let your child deliver it to the post box.

In the home lab

[Scienceworks](#) is keeping science simple for kids with the kind of how-tos that will stick in a child's head. Pop online for straightforward instructions on how to [make magnets at home](#), [create a rainbow](#) using a paper towel and black felt pen, and [make slime](#) from cornflour and water. Being Scienceworks, they then ask questions to keep kids thinking: "Punch your slime! What happens?"



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On board

Invest in some new boardgames and play them along with classics like Cluedo and Monopoly. Top-selling games right now include strategic card game Exploding Kittens, Dobble – described as an updated version of Snap – and Dixit, which involves players looking at cards, inventing a story to go with them, then other players guessing which card inspired their weird and wonderful tale. (More: [Eight board games to get you through lockdown.](#))

Tune time

Create a themed playlist for the family to listen to on future road trips or while doing housework. Kids can explore old hits or genres such as country music or 1950s musicals, or pick a keyword – ‘blue’, ‘fire’ or ‘Halloween’ – for inspiration.

...or revisit Music time with Glynis <https://www.theschoolshow.com.au/music>

Bust a move

Head online to find exercise video classes to do as a family, or you could focus on kids’ individual interests with a high-intensity workout for one and a yoga class for another. Try [The Body Coach TV’s five-minute workouts](#) and [Mr Yoga Australia’s](#) earnest Oz-themed sessions with poses called Desert Dingo and Sydney Swan.

...or revisit Sport with Nick L and Raul <https://www.theschoolshow.com.au/sport>

Under the sea

Over at the [Sea Life Aquarium](#) kids can try their hand at being a junior shark keeper using free worksheets, quizzes, livestreams and expert interviews on the aquarium’s website and Facebook page throughout the holidays. The aquarium is also running a [Zoom-based school-holiday camp](#) with interactive sessions on penguins, fish, sharks and rays, and reptiles and rainforest. Hosted by a marine educator, the three-hour sessions include activities and meeting keepers. Each session costs \$49 and an activity kit is \$93. And if you or the kids need a lift, you can [meditate on moon jellyfish](#) or angle for some compliments – an animated penguin telling you you’re marvelous can be sweetly uplifting.

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Hidden treasure

Set up an indoor or backyard treasure or scavenger hunt for younger children. Give them a list of things to find – use pictures for those too young to read a list – and whoever finishes the list first wins.



Don't forget chores...

Having chores to do in family routines helps children and teenagers develop a sense of responsibility and some basic skills like the ability to manage time. These are skills children can use for life. Even a young child can start to look after their toys. Older children can help with putting out and sorting washing, washing the car, cooking family meals and feeding pets.

... and make it worth their while

Tick off three school-holiday boxes in one by posting a list of one-off jobs you've been putting off, and price them to appeal to cash-savvy older children or teens. You might want a garden bed weeded, cupboards cleaned and organized, or a garage or laundry cleared out. If you have, say, a major painting project, negotiate an attractive rate to get them working alongside you. You get the job done, keep them busy, and they'll have their own money to spend.

To dye for

Tie-dyeing is back in style, from classic '70s swirls to refined Japanese shibori techniques. Get your hands on some plain white T-shirts and fabric dye – you can order online or click and collect from the bigger retailers – and get ahead on Christmas gifts for the nieces and nephews or dye fabric remnants to make unique face masks.

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Jam it

Do your kids play an instrument? If so, settle in for a jam session together, or dress up and crank out your favorite tunes for a Friday-night disco.



For art's sake

Assemble some paints, paintbrushes, fresh paper or canvases and let the kids unleash their inner artists. Set them up in the backyard or garage with drop sheets in case things get messy. Or you can arrange your own still life with fruit, flowers and household items and get everyone in the family to have a go at drawing or painting the still-life arrangement.

...or revisit Art time with Iana <https://www.theschoolshow.com.au/art>

More ways to stay sane during a lock-down

<https://www.officerss.vic.edu.au/page/238/Learning-from-Home>

[Why boredom might actually be good for us \(and our kids\)](#)

[Have a crafternoon with these easy craft projects](#)

[Go on a holiday at home](#)

[Eight board games to help get you through lockdown](#)

[How to support kids' mental health during lockdown](#)