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Digital Life Newsletter For Parents

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Following are some great ideas from Common Sense Media for online playdates, game nights, and other ways to socialize at a distance.

Whether you're trying to keep your preschooler busy while you take a work call, give your tween someone else to discuss Minecraft with, or host a neighborly game night, these ideas will come in handy when you're spending more time at home.

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Little kids/Big kids

Video-chat activities

Board games (Battleship, Candy Land, Chutes & Ladders, Sorry)

Works best with two to four players who all have the same physical game at their home. For most games, each player will need to move the other players' pieces simultaneously.

Charades

Either use the traditional rules, or just act goofy and ask friends to guess what you're doing.

Legos/Beyblades/other toys

Any toy that occupies your kid for a while can be played with alongside a friend or family member on the screen.

Marshmallow/toothpick structures

Look for building challenges using household materials online. If you don't have marshmallows, try pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks, construction paper, or cotton swabs. A few kids can print out the same challenge and then work on it simultaneously. They can cheer each other on, offer tips, or even race to see who finishes first.

Parallel play

Little kids may just enjoy playing side by side with an occasional glance to see that a friend is still there. You and the other parent can set up webcams for your kids and see how it goes.

Playdough or clay

Take out all the clay and any cutting or shaping tools and get started. Works well as parallel play or with specific goals ("Let's all make animals," or "Let's each make something and then guess what the other friends made").

Puzzles

A couple friends or a grandparent and a kid can chill out with their own puzzles, chatting at the same time.

Scavenger hunts

For younger kids, parents can guide the hunt by choosing something to find. For example, "Find something blue!" Or, "Find five of the same object!" Or, "Find three

things that start with the letter B!" Older kids might want to jointly come up with a list of items and then race to find them first.

Show-and-tell

This can work with a small group of kids so long as an adult can facilitate. Each kid takes a turn showing something from their home and talking about why it's special. For an ongoing activity, the group can choose themes (something given as a gift, something that makes you laugh, etc.) to focus on each day.

Story time

Parents, teachers, or reading-age kids can read aloud to a group. Picture books work well for younger kids, but older kids can choose to read chapter books -- try one chapter a day.

Tweens/Teens

Video-chat activities

Board games (Balderdash, Pictionary, Sorry, Trivial Pursuit)

Works best with two to four players. Older kids can play more sophisticated games, and not all require every kid to have their own gameboard.

DIY crafts

Whatever your kid's into -- knitting, decoupage, Legos -- they probably have a friend with a similar interest. They can do it together, or one can teach the other.

Group chat tools

Video-chatting with a group is extra fun when everyone's at home sheltering in place. The apps below have fun elements that Zoom just can't compete with. But these tools also invite some risk around contact with strangers or inappropriate content, so read the reviews before letting your kid download.

- [Bunch Group Video Chat Games](#)
- [Discord Chat for Gamers](#)

- [Houseparty Group Video Chat](#)

Make movies

For kids interested in filmmaking or just into YouTube, teaming up on a short film can be fun and kill some time. Take turns writing a script in a Google Doc, and then decide who will get which shots. Whomever has editing skills can pull it all together. Then schedule a screening via Zoom.

Make-up tutorials

Kids who watch YouTube will be familiar with the tutorial genre. This time, try it with one person teaching and one following the instructions. Could make for some hilarious mistakes.

Play [Heads Up!](#)

Like charades, but even more fun, this free app can be downloaded by both parties. Then players hold their phone up to their forehead, and the others give clues to help them guess from categories like "Pop Culture" or "Animals."

Play instruments together

Musicians can practice together, take turns teaching each other songs, or just jam. Very ambitious folks can create [music collages](#).

Social games and apps

These console and online games include social elements that can be fun for kids to play together or with family members, either in the same home or not. Some include text or voice chat. Dig into the reviews to figure out what makes sense for your family.

- [Draw Something](#)
- [Fortnite](#)
- [Jackbox Party Packs](#)
- [Mario Maker 2](#)
- [Minecraft](#)
- [Roblox](#)
- [Words with Friends](#)

Teach/learn TikTok dances

Teens love learning complicated dance routines on the social app TikTok. But now they can teach each other on video chat.

Watch Netflix together

The plug-in [Netflix Party](#) allows folks to stream together while chatting.

Write plays

For those who want to skip the shooting and editing involved in filmmaking, a playwriting session can be a great creative outlet. One person can write the script on paper while video-chatting with friends about ideas, or multiple people can collaborate on a shared document.

All the information in this article was taken from the following:

<https://www.common sense media.org/blog/online-playdates-game-nights-and-other-ways-to-socialize-at-a-distance>