

# The EYFS at home – activity ideas for young children



This list of activities is not exhaustive. It is intended to provide ideas for keeping younger children active, engaged and learning whilst they are spending an increased amount of time at home. It's particularly aimed at those who live in flats or have limited outside space and aims to utilise things that we are likely to have around the house already.

It is roughly organised into the areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (Communication & Literacy are amalgamated with Personal, Social and Emotional Development threaded throughout).



## Physical development

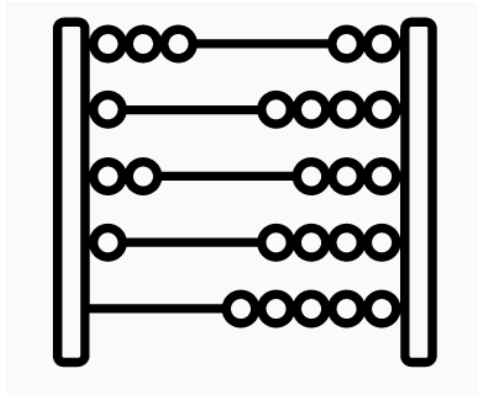
- Living room Olympics - How long can you stand on one leg? How many jumps can you do in minute? Who can jump the furthest? Don't forget to warm up and cool down. Maybe make some medals out of silver foil and learn some national anthems for the medal ceremony.
- Play stepping stones / Avoid the Shark- create a pathway around the room with pillows and cushions. If you touch the floor you're out.
- Make a masking tape tight rope on the floor - how far can you go without wobbling?
- If you have a balcony or garden provide a bucket of water and paintbrush and ask children to paint the walls/fence (very young children especially enjoy this & it's great for building shoulder strength needed for writing.)
- Make an obstacle course - crawl under tables, weave in and out of plastic cups, throw stuffed animals into the laundry basket. Who was the fastest? Most accurate?
- Toy bath time - wash any plastic toys in the bath, provide sponges, cloths and some bubbles.
- Hide small objects in a big bowl of shredded paper/rice for children to pick out with tweezers or tongs (develops the pincer grip ready for writing).
- Play parachute games with a bed sheet. <http://www.youthwork-practice.com/games/parachute-games.html>
- 10 things to do with tape <https://www.cbc.ca/parents/play/view/ten-fun-ways-to-play-with-tape>
- Play Follow the Leader.
- Egg and Spoon races (you can use a ball or a scrunched up paper as the egg.)
- Balloon tennis.
- Toy balance - balance a small soft toy on your head and walk from one point to the other. Once this is mastered up the challenge by having to walk around objects or in zigzags.



## Communication & Early Literacy

N.B. any mention of writing in these activities is dependent on the age and stage of your child. Some children will be at the stage of making marks, others may be beginning to make the link between sounds and letters and other will be writing words. Meet your child where they are, be a writing role model and provide opportunities for practice (not perfection).

- Read stories to your child as often as you can.
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes.
- Have a birthday party for a favourite toy – write invitations, make party hats out of paper, set a table, create a music playlist, play pass the parcel, Simon Says, musical statues etc.
- Play shops – use real tins and packets. Write signs, shopping lists and price labels.
- Play pirates – make some treasure maps, flags and ‘Keep Out’ signs. An upturned table, large box or the bath would make a perfect pirate ship.
- Make up a story together – choose three random things you have to get in the story (e.g. batman, a spatula, a rainbow). If imagination isn’t flowing change a story you already know well e.g. tell the story of The 3 Three Little Mice and The Big Bad Cat. Do this orally or write it down together and illustrate if your child is ready for that.
- Create your own board game around an interest your child has – lots of opportunities for practising number and writing simple words and phrases.
- Messy play in a tray or washing up bowl – use shaving foam, lentils, rice, flour and make patterns, create pictures or shapes, trace letters and numbers.
- Odd one out – choose four things and discuss which is the odd one out and why e.g. bat, bird, crab, aeroplane. No right or wrong answers if a reason is given.
- Set a timer for a minute and listen carefully – what did you hear?
- Barrier games – make a simple Lego model and keep it hidden. Give careful instructions so that your child can make the same model without seeing it. Then it’s their turn to give instructions.
- Rhyming – read rhyming books but pause before the second rhyming word and encouraging guess what it might be. Collect some pairs of rhyming objects/toys and jumble them up on a large tray, taking turns at matching all of the pairs up.
- Clapping syllables – choose objects of different syllable length (e.g. car, aeroplane, fire engine or cat, lion, elephant). Spend some time clapping the syllables together and then take turns to work out which word the other is clapping.
- Play the memory game “Grandmother Went to Market” (substitute with a loved character /known place to gain interest e.g. Catboy Went to Tesco)



## Mathematics

- Estimate and check how many steps it takes to reach a certain place or object. How about in giant strides, fairy steps, hops?
- Find objects around the house that are circles, squares, triangles. You can move on to 3D shapes such as cylinder/ cube.
- Set a timer and see how many things you can find that fit a category before it goes off e.g. red things, things smaller than a credit card, things with 4 corners.
- Person Buckaroo – how many objects can you balance on someone lying down on the floor before something falls off.
- Create a scavenger hunt – Have a set number of objects to find and keep count as you go – how many more left to find?
- Target – use soft balls or scrunched up balls of paper and set up numbered targets to aim for (paper bin, laundry bin, bowl). For additional challenge add up points as you go.
- Ten Pin Bowling – use old bottles, toilet rolls etc. as the pins. A good opportunity to work on early subtraction. “We had 10 pins and you knocked 4 down, how many are left?”
- Sorting by size or colour - buttons, toy cars, lego blocks etc.
- Data handling – call friends and relatives and find out what their favourite colour, fruit or animals are. You can make a bar chart as you go using Lego or Duplo or collate numbers in a tally chart
- Patterns – make repeating patterns out of different shaped pasta, coloured Cheerios buttons or toy cars etc.
- Measuring – how many Lego blocks/ pencils long is the washing machine? Estimate and then check. Is the sofa longer or shorter? How many blocks to go from one side of the room to the other.
- Tower races – whose tower is the tallest, who can build a tower of 10 blocks fastest?
- Explore symmetry – draw half a picture/ pattern and see what happens when you put a mirror next to it.



## Understanding the World

- Float and sink – gather objects from around the house. Predict whether you think they are going to float or sink and then test it out.
- Explore the senses – tie a scarf around your eyes and take turns to guess food by taste or smell or object by touch.
- Explore light and dark – turn off all the lights and use torches to make patterns and lines, imitate each other's movements, explore shadows.
- Grow a bean in bag. <https://lifeovercs.com/germinating-seeds-bag-science-experiment-kids/>. If your child is ready, keep a bean diary - draw a picture and write a short sentence every few days.
- Experiment with solubility - drop a range of substances into clear cups or glasses (e.g. sugar, oil, salt, food colouring, rice, flour, vitamin tablets). Before each one, predict whether it will dissolve or not.
- Make a weather station and record your findings. You could make a rain collector out of an upturned plastic bottle cut in half, use a wind sock and check the types of clouds you can see each day.
- Homemade marble runs - use recycling such as cardboard tubes, bottles and egg cartons. You can explore how different gradients affect speed. If you don't have marbles use toy cars or a soft ball.
- Make a family tree – lots of chance to talk about the past. Incorporate some geography. Where was Grandma born? Can you find it on Google maps or Street View?
- Stick some paper together and draw around each other – name and label parts of the body. For added challenge look up where our organs go and what they do.
- Involve your child in cooking. Talk about how materials change as you cook e.g. melting, freezing, dissolving.



## Expressive Arts and Design

- Junk modelling – all you need is your recycling and some tape. Even better if you have paper, pens and a glue stick
- Make a percussion band using pots and pans. If your child is ready practice copying rhythms or keeping the beat with a piece of music.
- Make playdough together  
No cook playdough recipe here - <https://theimaginationtree.com/best-ever-no-cook-play-dough-recipe/>  
or with fewer ingredients - <https://rainydaymum.co.uk/homemade-playdough-recipe/>
- Experiment with some paper planes. <https://handsonaswegrow.com/34-airplane-crafts-activities-kids/>
- Make maracas out of yoghurt pots and rice/pasta.
- Have a dance party. Use scarves or ribbons as streamers to dance with. Make it special by turning down the lights and making party decorations.
- Paint/ draw what you hear. Play some evocative music and children respond to the tempo, mood and volume as they draw.
- Build a den out of sheets and blankets.
- Experiment with body percussion – make a rhythm using clapping, tapping, stomping, clicking etc. Maybe someone could be the conductor who makes everyone go faster, slower, louder or quieter.
- Have an animal disco. Move like snake, elephant, kangaroo etc.
- If you have access to paint you can explore a number of techniques. Bubble, resist, mirror and marble painting are all options