

Resources for child care and at-home learning for kids to teens as we wait out coronavirus closures

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Social distancing doesn't mean you have to stay at home. Outdoor activities like bike riding maintain both social distance and healthy... (Bettina Hansen / The Seattle Times) **More** ▾

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Almost exactly a year ago, area schools closed for a week due to snow, and it wasn't easy for working parents. Now that all Puget Sound schools are closed through April 24, thousands of parents are scrambling to figure out how to keep their kids busy at home for six weeks. Long-term planning is hard when information changes daily, but based on what we know so far, closed schools don't have to mean binge-watching bad TV.

Child care

With no (physical) camps to go to, most families are looking at some combination of telecommuting, missed work and friends' houses. Tweens and teens with enough maturity may be staying home alone — or babysitting for families of younger kids. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction is recommending that middle and high school students stay home. Lots of families whose kids still need watching are turning to their schools' parent groups on Facebook to make individual, informal arrangements.

As of March 13, Northshore School District had created space and scholarships for temporary child-care services. Other districts are exploring options for supporting child-care needs.

Some Boys & Girls Clubs are still operating (new/nonmembers will pay an extra fee). Find your local club at positiveplace.org/clubs and call to find out if it is among them.

On Monday, Washington state and King County both said child-care centers are exempt from the order limiting gatherings to 50 people or fewer. Child Care Aware of Washington's hotline (800-446-1114 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each weekday) maintains a list of [child-care options](#).

Schools are continuing to provide free or reduced-price meals for pickup. Some districts are providing meal service to all children under 18, but the child must be present at pickup. Check your district's website for details. Generally, meals must be ordered in advance, pickup locations are limited, and there is a fixed window of time for pickup — usually one or two hours around midday. Families having trouble making the pickups or whose need has increased due to unpaid time off work may need to access the region's food banks. Call 211 or visit 211.org to find a food bank and other available resources near you.

Learning

Relaxed screen-time rules are almost inevitable under the circumstances, but coronavirus-related closures are not a bonus summer break. Schools will be providing learning opportunities even during the closure — either online or printed packets — that will help keep kids from slipping behind their peers in areas where schools have not shut down, but most of them are still working out the details, with the intent to have systems in place for the week beginning March 23. In the meantime, many districts have posted lists of learning resources on their websites. In response to the governor's closure order, even schools that were already operating on a distance learning model are re-evaluating their offerings and may be changing their approach or expanding efforts to provide internet hot spots and laptops to students who need them.

Parents should [talk to their kids](#) about the virus. Tweens and teens are old enough to understand what's going on and to be anxious about it. They also get a lot of sketchy information through social media; visiting the CDC and King County Public Health

websites together will ensure yours learn how to find reliable information. Help your kid make the connection between current events and school subjects: what we know about COVID-19 is due to the work of scientists; the people deciding whether to close schools and cancel public events are elected officials; and everything happening right now is going to be on history tests in a few decades.

If you're still worried about brain rot, check out Seattle Public Library's [online learning](#) resources, which include languages, computer skills and more. You can check out [digital media](#) including books, music, movies and educational TV shows without ever stepping foot in a library building. The King County Library System also has extensive [digital resources](#).

Physical locations of the Seattle Public Library are closed until at least April 13. SPL recently did away with late fees, so there is no need to worry about returning items you have already checked out while the library is closed. King County Library System's locations are also all closed through at least April 13 and all due dates have been automatically extended until April 30. KCLS is also waiving any late fees accrued between March 1 and April 30.

The world of free learning apps is vast, but not all apps are equally educational. [Khan Academy](#) is one trusted resource that offers standards-aligned lessons in core K-12 classes as well as AP classes, test prep and computer sciences. [DuoLingo](#) is one of many free apps for maintaining world language skills.

Activity

Kids today are so busy with homework and extracurricular activities that they often get a pass on helping out around the house. Now that they're stuck at home all day, put your kids to work on a deep clean. Yes, they will groan, but there has never been a better time to sanitize doorknobs and other high-touch surfaces. Vacuuming under the bed may not remove potential viruses, but it's much nicer being stuck at home in a clean house than a dirty one.

While you're home, March is the perfect time to start a garden. Whether you spend a week tearing up the lawn together or have your kids pop a few seeds in milk cartons on the porch or balcony, [Tilth Alliance's resources web page](#) has useful information on what you can grow right now.

Social distancing doesn't have to mean social isolation. Phone calls and video chats

can keep kids connected with their friends.

And social distancing also doesn't mean you have to stay at home. Dress for the weather and get your family outside. Outdoor activities like hiking and bike riding maintain both social distance and healthy activity levels.

Coronavirus resources

- [Taking your temperature? 98.6 isn't "normal" anymore](#)
- [What to do if you're sick: Call your doctor and stay home](#)
- [Where can I go? What can I do? Guide to social distancing](#)
- [Coronavirus information and prevention tips: a visual guide](#)
- [Tips for cleaning, disinfecting your home](#)
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