

MAKING THE MOST OF IT:

OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME FAMILY & CAREGIVER FREE RESOURCES
FOR CHILDREN AGES 2-8




MELA
MISSISSIPPI EARLY LEARNING ALLIANCE

A NOTE FROM MELA

Everyone at the Mississippi Early Learning Alliance is a former educator, AND a parent or grandparent. On top of that, we care about all Mississippi's children. That's why we've scoured the internet for the best stay-at-home learning FREE resources for parents, grandparents, and any caregivers wanting to use at-home time for fun AND learning. We've also including some sample "schedules" to use since everyone is more at ease (children and adults!) when we know what's coming next, plus added a few of our favorite activities using things around your home. Feel free to use the schedules and activities as-is or modify them to work for your family.

One last note before you dive in... when it comes to young children play IS learning, so don't stress if you don't feel qualified to give a lecture on animal habitats or multiplication. IN FACT, it's BETTER if you don't! Asking questions, exploring the world around you, using objects you find in your home or walk around your neighborhood can be more educational than any textbook! As long as you are talking to, listening, and playing with your child, they'll be learning.

LOVE,



Some Tips to Make at-home-time Learning Time!

Adapted from CNN.COM's article "How 'regular school' parents can homeschool their kids"

Make a schedule

Once you and your children have identified the subjects they will study, make a schedule and display it prominently so everyone in the family knows what's coming and when it's over. Most kids work off a schedule in their classrooms, so recreating something similar at home can ease the transition to a different learning environment for the foreseeable future.

Build in recess

All traditional school programs incorporate some sort of recess or outdoor time, and a homeschool schedule should be no different. "A walk in the woods is not only healthy for your body and spirit, but your mind, too," said Voigts, who has a PhD in international education and is based in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Downtime is your friend

Downtime, or time for kids to work on projects quietly and independently, is just as important as active time outside. Voigts noted that kids need time to "disconnect" every day — from each other, from parents, from technology and from the outside world.

Get Crafty

Art is an important part of education, and homeschooling also provides parents with an opportunity to get creative with crafts. Amanda Kingloff, founder of Projectkid.com, suggested getting creative with materials for different art projects every week like reusing washers, buttons, fabric swatches and ribbons, as well as used jars, plastic bottles and cardboard toilet paper rolls to form the basis for recycled art.

Cut Yourself Some Slack

Many parents with office jobs have been asked to do the same. This means that hundreds of thousands of mothers and fathers likely will be forced to balance homeschooling with their day-to-day responsibilities at work. Andrew Matranga, a college professor and father of three in Longmont, Colorado, said "We just need to try to do our best, whether we're teachers, parents or working professionals, There's no map for this journey that we're on."

SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULES

OPTION A

8:00-8:30	Setting up the Day: Discuss the schedule s to help your child understand what to expect.
8:30-9:00	Math or Reading Time: See Playing & Watching or Writing & Drawing Sections
9:00-9:15	Snack
9:15-10:00	Outside Activity or Music: See Teaching Section or Screen Free Activities
10:00-10:45	Free Journaling or Art: See Teaching or Writing & Drawing Sections
10:45-11:45	PE: See GoNoodle, Mindfulness Exercises, or Screen Free Activities
12:00-2:00	Lunch
2:00-2:30	Quiet Reading Time: See Reading or Listening Sections
2:30-2:45	Snack
2:45-3:30	Math: See Playing & Watching or Writing & Drawing Sections
3:30-4:30	Outdoor Recess: See Screen Free Activities

OPTION B

8:00-8:30	Read Aloud: See Reading or Listening Sections
8:30-9:15	Academic Time (No Technology): See Teaching or Writing & Drawing
9:15- 9:30	Creative Writing/Handwriting/Drawing: See Writing & Drawing
9:30-10:30	Outdoor Recess: See Screen Free Activities
10:30-11:30	Lunch
11:30-12:00	Quiet Time, Reading or Nap: See Reading or Listening Sections
12:00-1:00	Science, Art, or Social Studies Project time: See Teaching
1:00-2:00	Academic Time (Technology OK!): See Playing & Watching, OR For Your Phone Sections
2:00-3:30	Outdoor Recess
3:30-4:30	TV Time

FOR YOUR PHONE: APPS & TEXT SERVICES

There are more ways than ever to help combat learning-loss during out-of-school time for your child! One great way to remember to engage with your child or children is to use a free texting service that sends fun ways to learn with or educate your child at regular intervals. Below you'll find some services we recommend. Apps can also be great ways to engage together!

Thrive by 3rd Texts

AGES: 0-8

TOPICS: Health, Education, Development

To receive Thrive by 3rd texts geared specifically toward your child's age, just text "LEARN" to 53016 today! Once you sign up you'll get daily ways via text message that will support your child's health, education, and development!

VROOM

AGES: 0-5

TOPICS: Health, Education

<https://sms.vroom.org/vroomweb>

Vroom Tips™ help you do more with your shared moments. Add learning to mealtime, bathtime, bedtime, or anytime with 1,000+ fun, free activities.



Khan Academy Kids

AGES: 2-7

TOPICS: Math, Science, reading, language arts, many others

Download from your App store of choice

A wonderful, entirely free app to help support your child's learning and development from the same people who make Khan Academy!

Bedtime Math and Mini Math

AGES: Bedtime Math (3-9), Mini Math (4-5)

TOPICS: Math

Download the "Bedtime Math App" in iOS or Android or use: <http://bedtimemath.org/fun-math-at-home/>

These Math apps for iPhone/iPad or Android, available in both English and Spanish, are a great way for families with kids ages 3-9 or 4-5 to have fun with math together! Click for the daily math problem, a surprise problem, or any math problem in our archive, which you can browse to find your favorite topics.

Ninja Focus: Kids' Mindfulness App

AGES: 4+

TOPICS: Emotional Intelligence, Mindfulness, Compassion, Sleep

Find it in your app store of choice

An app highly recommended by families who use it that allows your kids to play games that also teaches them mindfulness and compassion.

PLAYING & WATCHING: VIDEOS & EDUCATIONAL COMPUTER GAMES

Although some experts worry about over-use of screen time, we at MELA know that it's not all bad and often can be a life-saver and game-changer! Check out these websites we recommend for finding fun learning-packed games and videos for your child!

Sesame Street Games

AGES: 3-6

TOPICS: Science, Reading, Math

<https://pbskids.org/sesame/games>

Loads of educational and fun games featuring the beloved characters of Sesame Street! From Big Bird and Snuffy's Letter Dance Party to Ernie's Dinosaur daycare, kids can play and learn.

Scholastic Learn at Home

Even when schools are closed, you can keep the learning going with these special cross-curricular journeys. Every day includes four separate learning experiences, each built around a thrilling, meaningful story or video. Kids can do them on their own, with their families, or with their teachers.

AGES: Grades PreK- K

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome/grades-prek-k.html>

AGES: Grades 1-2

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome/grades-1-2.html>

AGES: Grades 3-5

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome/grades-3-5.html>

AGES: Grades 6+

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome/grades-6-12.html>



PBS Learning Media- For Kids

AGES: 3-18

TOPICS: The Arts, Social-emotional development, Health, Science, Math, Language Arts, Literacy

<https://mpb.pbslearningmedia.org/student/#.Xm-eOxd7I24>

This website features self-directed learning activities for children of all ages that use PBS educational videos, games, and other resources. It will be great for a child ready for "choosing their own adventure" without as much adult supervision.

Cool Math 4 Kids

AGES: 12 and Under

TOPICS: Math

<https://www.coolmath4kids.com/>

These sites got started way back in 1997 to make math enjoyable for people who thought it couldn't be fun.



Highlights Kids Educational Videos

<https://www.highlightskids.com/explore>

AGES: 0-12

TOPICS: Science

With short videos that answer questions like “What’s inside of a black hole” and “How do pianos make sound” your child is sure to learn something new.

BrainPOP, BrainPOP Jr, and BrainPOP ELL

AGE: 3-13

TOPICS: Science, Social Studies, Math, Arts & Music, Engineering, Health

<https://www.brainpop.com/>

Usually a fee-based service BrainPOP is making it’s rigorous learning experiences accessible and engaging for all. You can access a free trial for at least 30 days.

GoNoodle

AGES: 2+

TOPICS: Fitness, Mindfulness

<https://family.gonoodle.com/>

GoNoodle® gets kids up and moving to fun, engaging content and games. Every dance party, yoga session, mindfulness activity, and game session is an opportunity for kids to wake up their bodies, engage their minds, and be their best.

EduCode Academy

AGES: 10+

TOPICS: Coding, Computer Science

<https://educode.org/>

Kids Learn JavaScript Programming, Game Development, Web Development and Data Science in a fun, self-directed, and interactive way.



National Geographic Games and Quizzes

AGES: 3-15

TOPICS: Science, Nature, Social Studies

A fun website with games and quizzes to engage your child around all the topics National Geographic Kids magazine covers!

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/games/>

ABCYa

AGES: 3-7

TOPICS: Math, Language Arts, etc

<https://www.abcya.com/>

ABCya provides many free educational games for grades PreK through 6 (although some games are only included in a fee-based service). Our activities are designed by parents and educators, who understand that children learn better if they are having fun. Games are categorized by grade and subject, and cover topics such as multiplication, parts of speech, typing, pattern recognition, and more.

READING: E-READER & ONLINE BOOKS

Can't get to the library? No problem! These resources give you and your child access to books from the comfort of...wherever you are! As long as you have an internet connection, your child can read or be read to for free!

Your Public Library's Website

AGES: All

TOPICS: All

Visit your community's public library website to see what options for checking out E-books or audiobooks are available online! For instance, some Libraries lets people use their local library cards to login to the 3M CloudLibrary app or Libby by Overdrive app, or Hoopla to virtually check out books!



Fun Brain's Reading Library

AGES: 4-12

TOPICS: Reading, Literature

<https://www.funbrain.com/books>

This site has popular children's book titles for kids to read to themselves (or have you read aloud!) online or on a tablet. Find favorites like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Judy Moody*, as well as others!

Tumblebooks: Books of the Day

AGE: 3-6

TOPICS: Reading

<http://booksoftheday.tumblebooks.com/BookADay.aspx>

Thanks to the Idaho Commission for Libraries, there are 3 different books read aloud to kids every day! One is a math book, one is a fun storybook, and the other is in spanish.

EPIC!

AGES: 12 and Under

TOPICS: Reading, Science

https://www.getepic.com/?utm_channel=search&gclid=EA1alQobChMly9PMmuaf6AIVCmKGCh2YX-QuHEAAYAiAAEgIVH_D_BwE

Typically a fee-based service, you can use Epic!'s free trial for 30 days. Epic!'s digital library includes many of the best kids books, popular ebooks, and videos such as *Fancy Nancy*, *Big Nate*, *Warriors*, and *National Geographic Kids*.

Storyline Online

AGE: 4-10

TOPICS: Reading, Literacy

<https://www.storylineonline.net/>

A great place to have storybook favorites read aloud to kids by famous people! Storyline Online is available 24 hours a day for children, parents, caregivers and educators worldwide. Each book includes supplemental curriculum aiming to strengthen comprehension and verbal and written skills.

LISTENING: PODCASTS, AUDIOBOOKS, & SONGS

If your child loves to hear you tell stories, then podcasts and audiobooks are for you! You can listen to them through a computer or through a podcasting app on your phone (Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Pocket Casts or Google Podcasts) so your child will be entertained and get to use their imagination to picture characters, places, and more! Music is another great way to engage kids so we've also listed some learning songs we love.

Stories Podcast

AGES: 3-10

TOPICS: Literature, Social Studies, Nature

<http://storiespodcast.com/>

A wonderful podcast with both original stories and retellings of classic folktales from around the world performed by talented storytellers. Children are captivated by the tales and will want to talk about what they've heard with you.



Brains On!

AGES: 4-10

TOPICS: Science

<https://www.brainson.org/>

Brains On! is an award-winning science podcast for kids and curious adults from American Public Media.

Circle Round

AGES: 4-10

TOPICS: Literature, Social Studies

<https://www.wbur.org/circleround>

Created and produced by parents of young children, WBUR's *Circle Round* is a podcast that adapts carefully-selected folktales from around the world into sound- and music-rich radio plays for kids ages 4 to 10. Each 10- to 20-minute episode explores important issues like kindness, persistence and generosity.

Free Educational Songs

AGES: 2-6

TOPICS: Health, Nature, Letters, Colors

<https://livingmontessorinow.com/free-educational-songs-for-circle-time/>

If you have a very young child at home, singing educational songs at each transition period of the day can help them learn and have fun. Here's a great video library of children's learning songs from YouTube and a Montessori program to use!

TEACHING: ADULT-SUPPORTED LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

Many caregivers may have greater free time when their children are out of school, so we've listed some sites with lesson plans and activities that may need adult supervision below. You'll find some science experiments, hands on crafts, and art projects, as well as scripted lesson plans for you to lead your child's educational journey.

PBS Kids Learning Lab- At Home Activities

AGES: 3-5, 6-8

TOPICS: Math, Literacy

<https://mpb.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/pbs-kids-lab-activities/>

When you have some time to spend learning with your child, visit this website with scripted lesson plan you can use to dive into math and reading with hands on activities. Since they feature some of children's favorite PBS characters and are listed by appropriate age group, children are sure to love them.

Highlights Kids Activities

<https://www.highlightskids.com/activities>

AGES: 0-12

TOPICS: Cooking, Health, Art

This is a section of the Highlights website that features fun, easy recipes for you and your child to make together as well as art activities and crafts that you can make to engage their brains.

National Geographic Family

AGES: 3-13

TOPICS: Nature, Science

Check this out for fun Adult-led ideas and conversations to help your kids explore the world.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/family/>

National Geographic Experiments

AGES 4-13

TOPICS: Nature, Science, Art

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/science/science-lab/>

Outdoor Classroom Day

AGES:5-16

TOPICS: Nature, Science, Art, Math

<https://outdoorclassroomday.com/resources/lesson-ideas/>

Here you can find a list of activities to do outside that are fun and promote learning.

Teaching Art At Home

AGES: 3-6

TOPICS: Art, math

<https://kinderart.com/blog/teaching-art-at-home/>

Whether you have an art background or feel like you can't draw a straight line, these activities move beyond "crafts" and will help you explain art (and math!) concepts to your children while making things you might even want to hang on your wall!

Tinkergarten Outdoor Activities

AGES: 0-8

TOPICS: Science, Nature, Art, Outdoor Exploration

<https://tinkergarten.com/activities>

Tinkergarten is an outdoor education program offered all over the country. Check out these great DIY activities they've made available for free for caregivers and kids to do together to get your kids outside playing and learning at the same time.

Mindfulness Exercises: Meditation Scripts for Kids

AGES: 4-12

TOPICS: Mindfulness, Emotional Intelligence

<https://mindfulness Exercises.com/meditation-scripts-for-kids/>

Meditation scripts for kids are one simple and impactful way of introducing the concept of meditation and mindfulness to youth. From visualization scripts to mindfulness body scan scripts, there exists a variety of meditation techniques we can introduce our children to to help them with emotional intelligence, patience, and stress management.



WRITING & DRAWING: PRINTABLES

We love writing prompts and fun coloring pages for those moments between activities (and because fine-motor skills and brainstorming are skills that need practicing, too!) If you have access to a printer, you can download and print these activities for your children that range from creative writing, handwriting, math, and coloring!

Highlights PreK &K, 1st Grade, and 2nd Grade

AGE: PreK & K

TOPICS: Handwriting, Letters

https://www.highlights.com/sites/default/files/public/bts_bfw_preschool_printable.pdf

https://www.highlights.com/sites/default/files/public/bts_bfw_1st_printable.pdf

https://www.highlights.com/sites/default/files/public/bts_bfw_2nd_printable.pdf

Here you can find a few simple worksheets to keep your child's school skills fresh.

Coloring the World

AGES: 2+

TOPICS: Nature, Animals

<https://www.coloringnature.org/>

This website has 675 free printable coloring pages that feature animals and nature.



All Kids Network

AGES: 3-10

TOPICS: Writing, science, math, geography

<https://www.allkidsnetwork.com/writing/>

This website is a great place to find handwriting worksheets for young kids and writing prompt worksheets for lower and upper elementary school kids. The rest of the website also has some science, geography, and math worksheets.

Great Schools

AGES: 3-10

TOPICS: Math, Handwriting, Letters, etc

<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/worksheets/>

At this website you can find lots of downloadable and printable worksheets and activities for making your own learning centers at home from this website that also provides school ranking data.

Scholastic

AGES: 4-13

TOPICS: Math, Handwriting, Story Prompts, Language Arts,

<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/kids-activities-and-printables/activities-and-printables-guides/free-printables-for-all-ages.html>

This website offers free printables for tons of subjects from the publisher of children's books.



SCREEN FREE IDEAS

Play is one way that children learn, so don't feel the need to cram every minute with "learning activities" since your kids are already learning just doing what they love to do! Here are some ideas to help make everyday activities a "game" and practice skills that help them build their brains.

- **Toy Car Wash:** Use Baking Soda and an old toothbrush to let your child wash toy animals or toy cars.
- **Create a Home Obstacle Course:** Time your children running in the yard, jumping over toys, shooting basketballs, or whatever you've got! The goal is to complete the course at a fast time.
- **Indoor or Outdoor Scavenger Hunt:** Give kids a grocery bag and make a list of objects kids need to find. The list can be made up of anything... Leaves, sticks, rocks, balls, a book about dinosaurs.... and then send them off to hunt!
- **Toy Sorting:** Have your child sort toys by color, shape, size, or category. This is a fun activity and teaches the skill of sorting!
- **Make homemade slime or playdough:** Recipes can be found online for slime and for playdough. The ingredients are simple and kids will play for a long time!
- **Write & Illustrate a Story together:** Use paper and pencil/markers/crayons to make up and write down story together and have your child illustrate it.
- **Play in the mud:** Take shovels, toy animals, or trucks outside to a mud puddle, (or lay down a towel and bring some dirt in a bucket and add water to make mud) and let your child play. Make sure they are wearing old clothes or are in as few clothes as possible!
- **Stuffed Animal Hide & Seek:** You can hide your child's stuffed animal all over the house and then let them find it!
- **Make a reading fort:** You can throw blankets over chairs or tables and then read in it with your child or let them play "camping out" inside!

The idea here is that it doesn't take "teaching" in the typical sense for you and your child to have fun together and for your child to learn things (Math: matching, sorting; Art: creativity, drawing; Science: Chemical reactions, nature; and Reading) while you're having fun! IN FACT, your children's brains are MADE to learn while playing!



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