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Dear Parents/Carers,

We hope this letter finds you and your family safe and well.

We understand that spending lots more time at home at the moment is hard and having a young pre-school child to look after certainly adds more of a challenge.

We hope the following ideas from the Moray EAL team will go some way to helping you and your child to have fun and make the most of this time together.

Firstly, and most importantly, relax and enjoy being with your child/children. No formal teaching is required, just spending time together having fun! Children learn best when they are relaxed and happy. Where possible, let your child choose the activity and then just ‘go with the flow’ and don’t worry about having a finished result. Talk to your child about what they are doing, taking the opportunity to introduce any new vocabulary e.g. size, texture, quantity, emotions etc. Always use your home language.

Because of the unusual situation, your child may have concerns and worries. Take time to listen to them and give honest, but simple, answers if required. If you can be relaxed and positive, your child will be too. Reassure them that ‘normal’ life will resume at some point, though we don’t know exactly when yet, and they will be able to see and play with their friends/family again.

Make the most of any outdoor space, whatever the weather, children love being outside and it doesn’t matter if they get messy. In fact, the messier – the better! If you’re not lucky enough to have a garden, try going;

for a walk/cycle around your local area,

to the park, (but not on the equipment),

to the beach,

to the woods.

To make it more fun play some games whilst you walk e.g. I-Spy, counting games, who’s the first to see a blue door/yellow flower/person with a hat? etc.

Remember to use sun hats and sun cream if it’s sunny.

Computers, tablets, phones and T.V.s also play an important part in your child’s fun and learning. However, try not to make those the main focus of the day and, if possible, keep screen time to 1 hour, or less. Your child will much prefer having you as a playmate!

Sometimes it’s difficult to know where to begin at the start of a long day, so the next couple of pages contain some ideas for activities, websites etc. to get you started.

**Activity ideas**

Junk play/construction using empty boxes, kitchen roll tubes, yogurt pots, egg boxes etc.

Large, empty boxes are great fun for imaginative play.

Play dough – recipe on last page.

Tent/den made from sheets/towels/blankets etc. – inside or outside.

Water and containers.

Water and brush on outside surfaces.

Chalk.

Bubbles – recipe at the end.

Ball games/play.

Mud play.

Obstacle course – inside or outside.

Hide and seek.

Simon Says.

Shopping – use items from kitchen cupboards and coins. Take turns to be the shopkeeper.

Sandpaper and wood.

Growing herbs/plants/flowers from seeds – use old yogurt pots/toilet roll tubes, etc.

Picnics – outside or inside.

I-Spy - using first language. Use the sound that the word starts with, not the letter name.

Helping at home: cooking, tidying, sorting washing, setting the table, washing dishes etc.

Baking.

Stories – from a book, or made up – in first language.

Songs and rhymes – in first language. Or make up silly rhymes and songs.

Dancing.

Counting games – how many red cars/blue doors/birds/pink flowers/apples etc.

Drawing, painting, collage, cutting and sticking.

Dressing up – use older siblings’, or parents’, old clothes and shoes.

Role play using teddies/soft toys.

Board games, card games, turn-taking games e.g. dominoes, Jenga, “I went to the market”, lotto etc.

**Useful websites:**

<https://www.youtube.com/user/SuperSimpleSongs> - songs and rhymes available in different languages.

Youtube – The Body Coach 5 Minute Move – 5 minute activity workouts for younger children.

<https://www.ealhub.co.uk/video-stories/> - Video stories, in English.

<https://www.parentclub.scot/child> - Lots of useful information and ideas, in English.

<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/> - Games and activities for children learning English.

**Bubble mixture Makes** 350ml **Prep**5 minutes

* 50ml washing-up liquid (one part)
* 300ml water (six parts)

1. Measure the washing-up liquid into a container, such as a jam jar or glass bottle.

2. Slowly add in the water, being careful not to create too many bubbles at this stage. Gently stir the mixture together to combine – a chopstick is perfect for this.

3. If you can, let the bubble mixture rest before using it, as it will make your bubbles even better.

4. When you’re ready, dip your bubble wand into the mixture and start blowing bubbles!

**Homemade bubble wands**

If you don’t have a wand from a store-bought pot of bubbles, don’t despair! You can have fun by looking for different items around the house that can be used to make bubbles. Here are some ideas to get you started:

* Paperclips – bend them into wands or use as they are
* Straws
* Biscuit cutters
* Pipe cleaners

## **Top tips**

**Glycerine** can be found in the baking section of most major supermarkets and can be added to the bubble mixture to make it more stable. We found that adding 1 tbsp glycerine to the recipe above made our bubbles last much longer.

**Letting it rest overnight**, or as long as you can bear to wait, does allow the mixture to settle and combine, which will improve your bubbles.

**Think big** – if you want to scale up the recipe, you just need one part washing-up liquid to six parts water. Try making a big bubble mixture in a washing-up bowl – then you can use bigger items, like colanders and slotted spoons, to make bubbles in the garden.

**Play Dough recipe**

**Ingredients:**

:: 2 cups flour

:: 1 cup salt

:: 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

:: 1½ cups hot water

Food colouring

**Step One:** Mix flour and salt in a big bowl.

**Step Two:** Add in any extras such as: glitter, spices, fragrance, e.g.vanilla essence.

**Step Three:** Mix together the oil, hot water and food colouring and add to the flour mix.

**Step Four:** Mix the ingredients together to form a dough. Turn out onto a floured board and knead until smooth.

## **Play dough problems: solved**

**Play dough too crumbly?**Add a little more oil.

**Play dough too sticky?** Add in a little more flour.

**Want your play dough to last a long time?** Wrap it up well in a plastic bag as soon as you’ve finished playing and keep in the fridge. It should last for a few months.