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Dear Readers,

We're two million weeks into quarantine and school is on everyone's minds. If you're feeling anxious about your child's education, you are not alone. In this issue of **The New Normal**, you'll find tips for encouraging kids to read and how to access free children's' books. You'll also find suggestions for fun, at-home educational activities, and get the exclusive scoop on what parents might expect when schools open their doors in the fall.

*Jeanine Cartron*

Editor

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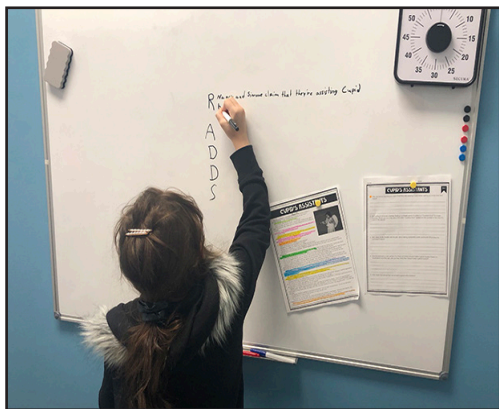
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# Love to Read



**Hudson, age 1,  
already loves reading**

## *5 Ways To Get Free Books Online (And How To Get Your Kids To Read Them)*

By Jeannine Cintron, Staten Island Parent Editor  
and mom of two cute but crazy kids.

It's never easy to get children excited about reading, but in quarantine it seems to be even more difficult. Overwhelmed with homeschool assignments and electronic devices calling their names, getting your kids to pick up a book has proven a daunting task during this pandemic.

*Below you'll find ten quick tips to encourage your children to keep reading.*

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# Love to Read

**Read together — and never stop.** There's no age limit, too young or too old, for reading to your kids.

**Express interest in their books.** Ask them what they are reading and listen attentively as they describe the story.

**Ask questions as you read together.** Make story time interactive and keep everyone engaged.

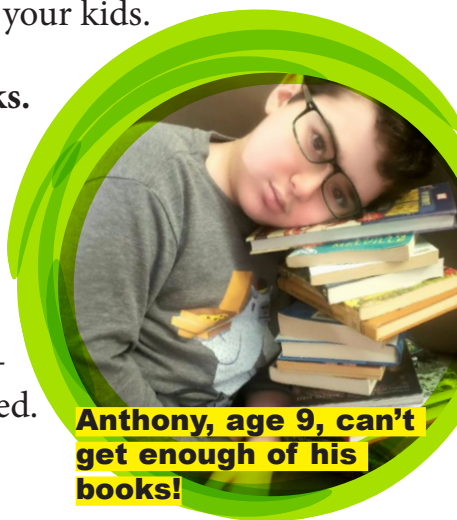
**Don't force book choices;** let them decide what to read on their own.

**Set a good example.** A child who sees his parents read is more likely to enjoy reading too.

**Try graphic novels and comic books.** Visuals might be the key to getting kids reading, and that is perfectly okay.

**Pay attention to authors.** If your child seems to like a particular author, look for more books by him or her. Explore the author's website together to learn more.

**Aubrey, age 4, reading the days of the week**



**Anthony, age 9, can't get enough of his books!**

**Take note of your child's interests.** Your child might enjoy sports-themed books, or books about music, or nature — anything they enjoy in real life will make for fun reading time.



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# Love to Read

Carve out daily reading time and make it part of your routine. Try not to skip story time– turn it into a ritual that kids can look forward to.



**Benjamin, age 2, enjoying a quick read**

**Have fun!** Be silly when reading. Use funny voices, make sounds and be expressive. Your child will associate reading with fun this way.

## Free Books Online:

[ReadingIQ](#) (use code LOVEREADING) – Over 7,000 books for kids of all reading levels.

[New York Public Library](#) – Apply for a library card using the [SimplyE](#) app and gain access to over 300,000 E-books.

[Open Library](#) – A project of the [Internet Archive](#), their goal is one web page for every book ever published.

[Barnes & Noble](#) – Get the free [NOOK](#) reading app and choose from millions of bestselling E-books, including free books for kids.

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# At-Home Activities

**Seraphina, age 5,  
bringing her  
community indoors**



## *8 Fun, Mind-Stimulating Activities for Kids*

By Shana Liebman, NYMP features editor.

**E**ven if your kids are continuing schoolwork at home while schools are closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, there are fun, mind-stimulating activities you can do at home to give your kids an exciting educational boost.

### **Discover Weather Wonders**

At 50 minutes past every hour of live programming, [The Weather Channel](#) shares a short video on some aspect of weather science. Learn how raindrops and rainbows form, why thunder happens, why is the sky blue, and how to stay safe in all kinds of weather.

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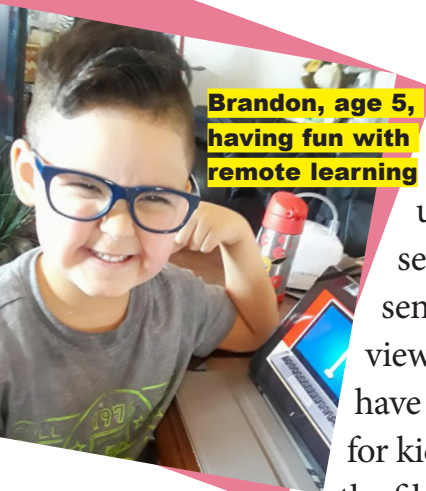
# At-Home Activities

## Host a Creative Writing Workshop

This doesn't have to be academic—it's just a time for kids to write their own stories. You could prompt them with ideas—write about a person who has an adventure while staying home, for example—or lead them in a journal-writing session. And this doesn't have to be limited to traditional story telling either. Introduce kids to poetry (haiku are usually a hit with kids!), have them write a parody of their favorite song, or create [story-telling rocks](#) to boost their quick-thinking skills.



Emily, age 8, homeschooling



Brandon, age 5, having fun with remote learning

## Start a Documentary Club

Make a list of kid-friendly documentaries inspiring little ones to see a different way of life, and then send the list to friends. After the viewing date, parents can set up have a video session for kids to talk about the film (and even suggest discussion questions).

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# At-Home Activities

## Get Other Parents to Host Educational Video Sessions

Because every parent on your block or in your building likely has a great talent or skill, ask a few of them to give a 45-minute “class” (via video)—it could be cooking, music, drawing, yoga. Let another parent lead your kids in gaining a new cultural skill. After all, they say it takes a village.



**Mikala, age 6, and Chloe, age 8, creating a backyard zoo**

## Do Some Science Experiments

What kid doesn't want to get messy? [Steve Spangler](#)

[Science](#) sells cool science kits that use supplies from around the house.

[Steamsational](#) has a long list of STEAM-based experiments and activities kids can do at home—and most come with videos for easy instruction. You can also make some crafts or cook up a recipe to teach

kids about science, including [bath](#)

[bombs](#), [growing stalactites](#), learning



**Anthony, age 9, finding a vaccine for the Coronavirus**

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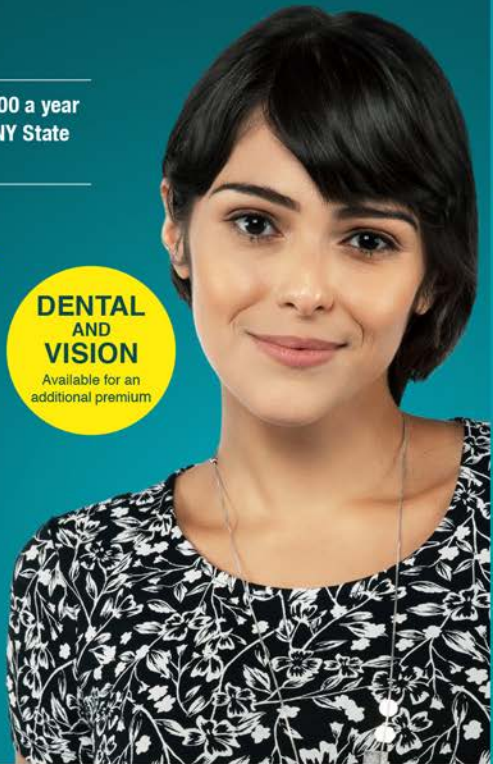
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# At-Home Activities

about [trajectory with rockets](#), or whipping up some [homemade ice cream](#), [English muffins](#), [marshmallows](#), or [DIY microwave popcorn](#).

## Go on (Virtual) Bucket-List Trips

While you can't actually go exploring, there are plenty of awesome virtual places to check out—including ones you may never actually get to visit in your lifetime. For example, [look around Mars](#) in real time or [tour Yellowstone National Park](#). [See the Great Wall of China](#) or [watch the polar bears in the tundra](#). Try

Googling your fantasy destination to see if there's a virtual trip online. There is also [a slew of museums that are offering virtual tours of exhibits](#), both in NYC and around the globe.

## Listen to Audiobooks

Most kids seem to be reading up a storm while cooped up and trying to stay on

**Angelina, age 2, spending the day at her in-home virtual amusement park**



**Mia, age 7, creating with Marshmallows and toothpicks**



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# At-Home Activities

track, but there's another literary world out there: audiobooks. With sites like [Open Culture](#) and [Audible Stories](#), you can listen to the classics as a family or let older kids use headphones to get lost in a fictional world. Plus every day, authors and celebrities are reading storybooks to younger kids on social media: Check out [@savewithstories](#) on Instagram or [#gadbookclub](#) on Twitter (yep, Josh Gad, the voice of Olaf, is reading stories, complete with spectacular voices!).



Mia, age 4, loves science

## Make Art

Since there's now a waiting room for access to Mo William's excellent [Lunchtime Doodles](#), check out the [Tate Museum's](#) art projects for kids. There are video instructions for a wide range of eclectic creations from a kaleidoscope to soap carving to Picasso imitations.



Goldie, age 4, creating a canvas of color

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# Back to School



Mason Pregent, age 8

## *What to Expect When Schools Open*

By Jeannine Cintron, Staten Island Parent Editor  
and mom of two cute but crazy kids.

**W**ith schools in New York officially closed for the remainder of the academic year, many wonder what to expect when (and if) schools open again in the fall. Simply put, there is no perfect way to prepare our children for a return to school after a life-altering global pandemic.

To the disbelief of many parents, Governor Cuomo even expressed the possibility of replacing remote learning with traditional school altogether. He meant later more than sooner, in a wave-of-the-future kind of way, but parents were panic-stricken nonetheless.

# Back to School

We reached out to our followers on social media and found many parents fear neither children nor schools will be ready to reopen when the time comes. Some parents predict a second wave of the virus, while others ponder if school will even open in September at all.

The CDC recently released a strict plan for reopening America. [The 60-page document](#) details guidelines for schools that extend far beyond staying six feet apart. Some of the more aggressive highlights include:

- Field trips should be virtual only
- Cloth masks should be worn at all times by students and staff
- Lunch should be served in the classroom, not the cafeteria
- Students should stay with the same teacher throughout the school day
- “Sneeze guards” and partitions should be installed where social distancing isn’t possible
- Children are to sit one per row on the bus, skipping a row for each child
- Arrival and drop-off times and locations should be staggered
- Daily health checks should be performed (e.g., temperature screening and/or or symptom checking) on staff and students

The plan has been met with some controversy, as many parents and staff feel it isn’t possible to meet such tight standards. For more details, read the designated section on reopening schools in detail at the [CDC website here](#).

Parents are not the only ones concerned about reopening schools. The United Feder-

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# Back to School

ation of Teachers (UFT) started a [petition](#) to the Federal Government via change.org demanding the following precautions be taken before schools can open their doors.

- Widespread access to coronavirus testing to regularly check that people are negative or have immunity
- A process for checking the temperature of everyone who enters a school building
- Rigorous cleaning protocols and personal protective gear in every school building
- An exhaustive tracing procedure that would track down and isolate those who have had close contact with a student or staff member who tests positive for the virus

The teachers cited the importance of protecting staff, students, and their families in their plea to the government. There are currently well over 100,000 signatures on the petition.

Other changes to expect, at least down the line, could be a revamp of the entire school system. One Long Island educator penned his opinion, which has since gone viral. In [After the Pandemic: Our Children Deserve an Education Revolution](#), Port Washington Superintendent Mike Hynes calls for changes that include less homework, more emphasis on student well-being, the end to standardized testing for younger grades, more physical activity, and better investment of resources, among others.

What are your thoughts?  
Head to our Facebook page to [join the conversation](#).

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