**How to Have Remote Playdates and Keep Kids Social During the COVID-19 Outbreak**

Extract from Good Housekeeping

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[Social distancing](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/health/wellness/a31500257/what-is-social-distancing/) and recent school closures have made it difficult for kids who are trying to stay connected. As parents, it's more important than ever to make sure our kids have access to their friends so they don't become isolated. Since parents are advised against in-person playdates and taking their kids to playgrounds — where the [coronavirus can live on surfaces](https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/new-coronavirus-stable-hours-surfaces), such as plastic and stainless steel, for up to two to three days — our kids are spending most of their physically apart from each other. But that doesn’t mean we can’t get creative and find ways for kids to remain close.

## **Set up a virtual playdate (even if they don't do much during it).**

Apps, websites, and services like [Zoom](https://zoom.us/ent?zcid=2582), [FaceTime](https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT204380), [WhatsApp](https://www.whatsapp.com/), [Caribu](https://caribu.com/" \t "_blank) and [Marco Polo](https://www.marcopolo.me/) make it possible for kids to have some digital time with friends. Whether your child wants to virtually meet up with a group of school friends or simply chat one-on-one with buddy for a few minutes, continuing to interact socially is vital to their well being. These apps also help kids stay connected as they would in a school setting, making it possible for them to read to each other, work on a project together, attempt a simple game (we've heard of rounds of virtual Dungeons & Dragons), or simply sit together while doing a bit of schoolwork.**In fact, the kids don’t even have to talk — they might simply find comfort in having a friend around.** For older kids, their social lives are all online anyway, so it might be an okay time to think about relaxing [screentime rules](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/parenting/a30613327/limit-screen-time-tips/" \t "_blank).

## **Virtual Gather their friends for a game night.**

Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, games have long had a social component for players who weren't in the same room together. **Apps like online game site**[**Pogo**](https://pogo.com/iphone/landing.do)**allow your kids to play some of their favorite board games, like Monopoly and Yahtzee, with friends without sitting around the same table.** It's also possible to game with friends using [Xbox Live](https://go.redirectingat.com/?id=74968X1525078&xs=1&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.xbox.com%2Fen-US%2Flive&sref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.goodhousekeeping.com%2Flife%2Fparenting%2Fa31910863%2Fcoronavirus-help-kids-connect-to-friends%2F%3Fpre%3Dlife%252Fparenting%252F%26prefix%3Da%26id%3D31910863%26del%3D%26variantId%3D%26post%3D%252Fcoronavirus-help-kids-connect-to-friends) and [Nintendo Online](https://www.nintendo.com/switch/online-service/?cid=A1005-01:ch=pdpd) (both of which require paid subscriptions) — kids can share their usernames and play video games like Minecraft and Roblox against each other. For something lower-tech, [Let’s Play Uno](https://www.letsplayuno.com/) allows kids to play this timeless card game with friends for free. And [Pokemon Go](https://pokemongolive.com/en/" \t "_blank) lets kids to interact with friends and even track their activity in the game. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the game’s manufacturers have made adjustments to the game that bring the Pokemon closer to home.

## **Host a movie night – watch together separately**

[Netflix Party](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/entertainment/a31788747/how-to-do-netflix-watch-party/) lets kids to watch movies together. Anyone with a monthly [Netflix subscription](https://www.netflix.com/) can add this [free Google Chrome extension](https://www.netflixparty.com/). **You can synchronize video playback with your child’s friends and add group chat so kids can "talk" during the movie.** Anyone in the group can pause, play, fast forward and rewind the movie so everyone is in the same spot. Only those with an invite can get into the party, so parents don’t need to [worry about strangers](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/parenting/a28750074/internet-safety-facts/) getting into the chat room. (For those without Netflix, [Airtime](https://www.airtime.com/) does something similar for online videos and TV shows, with video reactions instead of text ones.) Grab your kid some snacks, set up a comfy spot on the couch, pop some popcorn, and let them have a long-distance movie night with a friend or two.

## **Look for (or create!) neighborhood scavenger hunts.**

Lots of communities have come together to find ways for kids to leave little messages for each other, even when they couldn't meet face-to-face. A group of neighbors in Brooklyn, for example, put rainbows in their windows. (A neighborhood in the U.K. did [something similar with teddy bears](https://www.womansday.com/life/a31927236/bear-hunt-corona-virus-activities/).) **When kids and their parents went out for walks, they made a game of finding the windows with rainbows and waved to neighbors and friends who passed from a safe distance.** Described as a neighborhood game of "I Spy," [The Quarantine Rainbow Connection](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1YwAqVlT8npzqRL8s79oIH0o_L6ASv0tx&ll=40.68340860465587%2C-74.00458402606807&z=13&fbclid=IwAR1acTPj10iwpMjej3urXN3Q9JbA43-_XfQf06zNUuYUYHKEMqzL6FCnpFk) even has a Google map of participating homes.