

Off-Screen Activities for 3–7 Year Olds

In the age of Zoom fatigue parents often want more off-screen options for their kids. Here are 14 ideas to get you started.

Pet Rocks



Oliver Paaske Unspl

Learn about different [types of rocks](#). Go on a walk to find a rock of your own. If you would like a pet rock, think of a name and create a habitat for it. You can use paint, glue, googly eyes or buttons to decorate your rock or leave it as it is.

Dance, Dance, Dance

Choreograph a dance. This can easily be done solo or with siblings, classmates, or neighbors. This is an opportunity for your kiddo to put their favorite song on repeat as they memorize the moves.

Charades

This is a great opportunity for kids to act something out and find a way to communicate without talking.

Design a Symbol

Take a symbol like a peace sign or heart and place objects like figurines or flower heads to create this shape.

Build a Fort

Build a fort. Forts can be big or small made of branches, bedsheets, cardboard, or couch cushions.

Scale a City



Omar Albeik Unsplash. How can a crowded city street like this, transform into a socially safe one?

Scale a socially distant LEGO city to 6 studs apart. What does that look like in terms of planning space between buildings? How will vehicles park? Where to place park benches?

Take the same concept of scale and build it out of wooden blocks or cardboard boxes.

Explore Mood and Feelings with Music



Photo by Katy Chatel

Select a handful of songs from different genres of music. Sit quietly, draw, or move as you listen to the song. How does the music feel in your body? What does it make you think of? What feelings come up? What mood are you in when the song is over? What kind of music makes you feel calm? Excited? Joyful?

Get out some water color paints and move your brush to the music. What colors do you choose? What happens when you paint with your eyes closed? How does the brush feel in your other hand? Tape some paper on the floor and see how it feels to paint with your toes? Is it frustrating? Freeing? Ticklish?

Create a Home

Collect cardboard boxes to make an apartment building, house with many rooms, or street with different homes. You can use items like bottle and marker tops, small boxes and broken jewelry to create furnishings.

Time to Stare at the Sky



Photo by Katy Chatel

Get out safely as a family. Walk to a local park. Lie in some grass and look up at the sky. Play. As parents, many of us have to be “on” for what feels like nonstop. When we are constantly on, sometimes we check out of being present in the moment. There’s nothing like lying next to your kids marveling at the sky to bring you back to present.

Stage a Small Scale Protest

First, young people decide on a cause they feel passionate about.

Second, do a little research about the issue to gain some new knowledge and insight. This could include calling people who know about the cause, watching an informative video, or reading more about it.

Third, get ready for some sign making. Gather together some kind of post, some kind of sign, tape, and something to write with like: Popsicle sticks, chopsticks, toothpicks, used straws, markers, crayons, paper, cardboard or other similar supplies.

Come up with some catchy slogans that support your cause. Make signs and tape a stick to the back. Gather the masses of stuffed animals and action figures from your home to participate in protest. You can roll up a piece of paper to make a megaphone for spokesbears and reptilesentatives to be heard.

Create a Household Election

Every member of the family who is able to participate can help come up with ballot measures. Some suggestions include: What’s for dinner? What’s for Friday Night Movie? What’s the next chapter book to read aloud? What activity will you do as a family this weekend? Vote in or vote down a new house rule. You can either first hold a primary election to decide on contending ballot issues or go directly to a general election with selected options to uphold or oppose. Convert a cardboard box into a ballot box. Use a closet, a shower or bathtub behind a curtain, or another private place for everyone to cast their ballots on scraps of paper. Get kids involved in counting and checking ballots, making tally marks on paper under the number of votes for each issue.

Explosive Playdough Volcanoes

Make some playdough together. There are plenty of simple recipes online. In my experience cream of tartar makes a difference.

From the playdough, kids can build mountains with a hollow center. In the cavity put in a spoonful of baking soda. Pour in vinegar mixed with red food coloring and watch the explosion occur.

Leaf Walk Window Decoration



Kelly Sikkema Unsplash

Take a walk and collect as many different leaves as you can find. Can you identify the trees they came from?

If you have waxed paper and an iron, you can place the leaves between two sheets and iron them together. They make wonderful colors to tape or hang in a window.

Wish Jars

In a jar put in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ Alka Seltzer or other fizzy tab, and several drops of food coloring. The fizzy tab is worth the mesmerizing experience of seeing the little blobs that emerge. While you watch, make a wish.

An alternative is to add glitter instead.

Jars can be kept in a window. Anytime someone in your family needs a moment to unwind, shake the jar and watch the ingredients swirl and separate.