



Tip Number Three: there's lots of value in everyday learning

Over the holidays, you might be trying to keep some structure in place for your children by carrying on with schoolwork or you might have decided to have a break and just enjoy spending time with each other. Either way, there are likely to be times when you do things together like cooking, cleaning, watering the plants, etc. To you, these may seem like everyday jobs, but they actually hold enormous educational value as well!

Let's take **cooking or baking** as an example. There is so much your children can learn through cooking with you. Here are just a few of the learning opportunities:

- **Reading** – understanding what they are reading and following the instructions.
- **Writing** – the kind of layout and language of instructions, e.g. what imperative verbs are (they're the 'bossy' verbs that tell you what to do such as pour, mix, stir, heat, etc.), the use of formal language, choosing the right tense to write in, lists of ingredients with specific measures.
- **Maths** – measuring ingredients and reading scales of different types (i.e. weight and capacity, some of which might require reading between the numbered parts of the scale so calculating what each unnumbered part of the scale represents); scaling recipes up or down (e.g. if the recipe is for 4 people, but you need to feed 6, you need to multiply all of the ingredients by 1.5); calculating time differences (e.g. if you put the cake in the oven at 10.45am and it needs 35 minutes, what time will we take it out? A simpler version is within the hour, e.g. start at 10.10am and add 35 minutes).
- **Science** – the effects of one substance on another (e.g. the effects of yeast in bread); the effect of heat or cold on a substance; reversible and irreversible changes (e.g. if you freeze water into ice, you can defrost it back into water so this is reversible; if you mix eggs, sugar, butter and flour to make a cake, you can't get those raw ingredients back so this is irreversible).
- **Social skills** – cooperating with each other, taking turns, talking about what you are doing together, being patient and learning to wait.
- **Learning about risk and staying safe** – understanding how to use a knife safely; which parts of the oven get hot and how to protect yourself from burns; how to cook meat and fish thoroughly; how to store food safely keeping raw and cooked food separate; using different knives and chopping boards for raw and cooked food.

That's just one example. There are plenty of other things you might do that have lots of value too, such as:

- **Shopping** – if you're lucky enough to be able to book an online delivery (!), get your child to help and ask them questions whilst you're doing it. E.g. which box of eggs is best value? How do you know? How much is each egg in this box compared to this box? If we're feeding four of us, which packet of tomatoes should we get? You might sit without them being able to see the screen and get them to add or estimate the total of the shopping as you go along.
- **Gardening** or looking after house plants – growing from seed helps children understand germination; plants need water, light and nutrients to grow; naming the parts of a plant (e.g. roots, stem) and parts of a flowering plant (you can Google these!); taking responsibility for a living thing,

e.g. you could give your child a pot plant or a part of the garden to be responsible for, researching what that particular plant needs to thrive and how best to look after it.

- **Colouring and modelling** – even simple things like colouring and playing with play-doh can really help too. Children develop what we call fine motor skills by doing these things. Fine motor skills are the ability we all develop to make small movements with our hands and wrists and developing these helps children get more pencil control and therefore better handwriting.
- **Board games** – any game that involves taking turns and cooperating is great. If there is some maths involved, even better! In school, our teachers ensure children learn both independently and in small groups so that they develop these so-called soft skills that enable them to work effectively with other people. It's great to carry this on at home, particularly during a time when our children aren't seeing each other and practising these skills together.
- **Speaking and listening** – almost anything you choose to do can help your child's communication skills. The main thing here is that you just spend time together both talking and listening. By talking, you are helping to develop your child's vocabulary, their understanding of the world around them, how you structure sentences, how you change your speech based on the situation and who you are talking to, how you articulate your ideas and opinions to other people. In school, we teach children to actively listen – this means that they give eye contact to the person talking, show positive body language by keeping their hands and feet still, stay quiet and wait until it's their turn to talk, use their ears and brains to understand what is being said. It might seem obvious to you and me as adults, but it's really helpful to make these things explicit with children. We also teach the children to agree and disagree productively, saying things like, "I respect your opinion but I disagree because..." or "I like your idea. I've got something to add to that..." and so on.

So, please bear all of this in mind when you're going about your daily lives in lockdown. Whether you're making breakfast or visiting a virtual museum, there's lots of value in almost anything you choose to do.