

**Quick Read**

**Three smarter ways to use screen time while kids are at home**

**COLUMBUS, Ohio:** As families everywhere adjust to social distancing measures like closed schools and child care centers, workplaces and more, parents are grappling with questions regarding their kids' use of technology.

Even then, there are tips you should bear in mind to make the most of screen time for kids who are cooped up at home.

Rather than handing over the remote or the iPad, parents can help young children by choosing media that's worthwhile.

By the time children are about age 3, high-quality media like Sesame Street can help them learn about words, numbers and even important facts about how to stay safe, research has shown.

Kids can also learn from apps, such as Bedtime Math (which has been shown to have long-term effects on children's math skills), Measure That Animal (a Sesame Street game focused on improving children's measuring skills) and Unicorn Adventure (which uses a fantasy game to teach about healthy foods).

This all means that screen time doesn't just have to be a way to keep your child occupied while you send some emails or tend to household chores. But where can you find high-quality educational media?

Resources like Common Sense Media provide research-based information and ratings about all types of media for kids of all ages. They even have a special page to help families during the coronavirus pandemic.

Shows and apps from PBS KIDS are all based on child development research and a search tool on their website lets you choose your child's age and a topic area to search for appropriate media. It also provides related activities that can be done both online and without a device. Another way to tie learning and screen time is to follow your child's interests and find educational media to match whatever they are obsessing over. If 6-year-old Robby is begging to make pancakes for breakfast now that he's not rushing off to school, find a video that shows the science behind how baking soda makes those pancakes extra fluffy.

Although adults often use media as a babysitter, young children get more out of it when they use it with an adult. Grown-ups, after all, can help them understand what's going on and make connections to the real world.

One study found that when 3-year-olds watched a Dora the Explorer episode, three in four thought the Spanish words in the show weren't real or said they weren't sure if they were real.

Not surprisingly, those children were less likely to learn from the show. —AFP

**Shame on you, Britain tells coronavirus panic-buyers**

**LONDON:** Britain told people who were panic-buying and hoarding food due to the coronavirus outbreak to calm down, pointing to a video on social media showing an exhausted nurse driven to tears by finding shelves bare after her shift.

Shoppers have been emptying the shelves in many supermarkets over the past week, with some wrestling over toilet roll and others hoarding everything from pasta to frozen peas as the government told people to stay home and avoid contact.

A billion pounds (US\$1.2 billion) of extra food have been squirrelled away over the past three weeks, putting massive pressure on supermarkets, environment and food minister George Eustice said.

At a news briefing, he urged people to "be responsible when you shop and think of others".

"There is more than enough food to go round and our food supply chain is able to expand production to cope with increased demand," he said.



"Buying more than you need means that others may be left without, and it is making life more difficult for those front-line workers such as our doctors and nurses and NHS (National Health Service) support staff."

Despite such appeals, not least from Prime Minister Boris Johnson and major supermarkets, shelves of meat, pasta, tinned goods and toilet roll were empty on Saturday in some London supermarkets. Some had brought in extra guards and set up special queuing zones.

The government has set aside rules restricting deliveries to supermarkets to help stores cope with increased demand.

It has also set aside competition rules so that supermarkets can share staff and delivery vehicles and coordinate opening times to ensure that every part of the UK is properly supplied.

The video posted by the critical care nurse has been shown on BBC national news.

"Frankly we should all be ashamed that that has to happen," said NHS medical director Stephen Powis. "It's unacceptable. These are the very people that we will all need to look after perhaps us or our loved ones in the weeks ahead."

Eustice said that, in the last week, manufacturers had produced around 50 per cent more food than they usually would.

"We don't think there is a risk of food running out," he said. "The challenge we have is getting food to the shelves and keeping it there." —Reuters

**North Korea says Trump wrote to Kim, offered coronavirus cooperation**

**REUTERS:** North Korea welcomed what it said was a letter from US President Donald Trump to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, saying it was a sign of "the special and very firm personal relations" between the two leaders despite recent frictions.

The statement by Kim's sister Kim Yo Jong came a day after the nuclear-armed North fired what appeared to be two short-range ballistic missiles off its east coast on Saturday, the latest such action it has taken this year.

"In the letter, he... explained his plan to propel the relations between the two countries of the DPRK and the US and expressed his intent to render cooperation in the anti-epidemic work," an apparent reference to the coronavirus pandemic, Jong said in the statement reported by the North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

A senior administration official confirmed Trump sent a letter to Kim, "consistent with his efforts to engage global leaders during the ongoing pandemic. While the letter reflects "excellent" ties between the two leaders, Jong warned that broader relations between their

two nations are different.

"We try to hope for the day when the relations between the two countries would be as good as the ones between the two top leaders, but it has to be left to time and be watched whether it can actually happen," Jong said.

"The President looks forward to continued communications with Chairman Kim", the official said. The letter said that despite good personal relations between the leaders, "if impartiality and balance are not provided and unilateral and greedy intention is not taken away, the bilateral relations will continue to aggravate."

Since Trump held a third summit with Kim last June and briefly stepped into North Korea from the demilitarised zone with South Korea, no progress has been made on the US president's bid to get Pyongyang to give up its nuclear and missile programs.

North Korea has attempted a series of missile launches, including the launch of two apparent short-range missiles in the last day or so, as it tries to pressure the United States and its allies to lift economic sanctions. —AFP



**ROME:** Italian army soldiers patrol streets after being deployed to the region of Lombardy to enforce the lockdown against the spread of coronavirus disease.

**Italy reports almost 800 new COVID-19 deaths, setting daily record**

**ROME:** Italy reported 793 new coronavirus deaths, a one-day record that saw the country's toll shoot up to 4,825 - 38.3 per cent of the world's total.

The increase of 19.6 per cent is by far the largest daily rise in absolute terms since the contagion emerged a month ago.

The number of COVID-19 infections rose by 6,557 to 53,578. The total number of fatalities in the northern Lombardy regions around Milan was 3,095 deaths and 25,515 cases. On Thursday, Italy overtook China as the country to register most deaths from the highly contagious virus.

Of those originally infected nationwide, 6,072 had fully recovered on Saturday compared to 5,129 the day before. There were 2,857 people in intensive care against a previous 2,655.

Italy has reported 1,420 deaths since Friday, a grim figure that suggests the pandemic is breaking through the government's various containment and social distancing measures.

The Mediterranean nation of 60 million has been under an effective lockdown since Mar 12, when public gatherings were banned and most stores shuttered.

Police were out in force across the streets of Rome on Saturday, checking documents and fining those outside without a valid reason, such as buying groceries.

Joggers were asked to run around the block of their houses, parks and beaches were closed, and the government in Rome prepared to extend school and other closures into the summer months.

But the outbreak keeps gathering pace in the new global epicentre of a virus that was first reported in December in China and has since transformed the world, straining health care systems, upending lives for millions and pummeling stock markets globally.

**Spain reports 394 new coronavirus deaths, up 30% in 24 hours**

Spain announced 394 new deaths caused by COVID-19, a 30 per cent increase from the previous day.

A total of 1,720 people have died in Spain from the disease, with the country having the second-highest death toll in Europe.

The number of confirmed cases of the disease rose by 3,646, or 14.6 per cent, to 28,572, according to health ministry figures, with officials warning infections will rise further in the coming days.

With 1,785 being treated in intensive care units for the coronavirus, there is mounting concern about overcrowding at hospitals.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warned late on Saturday that Spain's outbreak, already among the harshest in the world, would continue to worsen. "We must prepare ourselves emotionally and psychologically for very hard days ahead," he told the nation in a televised address late on Saturday.

**Gaza authorities confirm first two COVID-19 cases**

Authorities in Gaza confirmed the first two cases of novel coronavirus, identifying the individuals as Palestinians who had travelled to Pakistan and were held in quarantine on their return.

Gaza's health ministry said in a statement that "two citizens tested positive (for COVID-19), after they returned from Pakistan" on Thursday.

It stressed that neither person left the quarantine facility near the Egyptian border and did not mix with the wider population.

Health ministry spokesman Ashraf Al-Qudra said the sick were two men, aged 30 and 40, who were stable condition.

Authorities in Gaza have said that more than 2,700 Palestinians are in home-isolation, mostly people who had returned from Egypt.

The head of the World Health Organization's Palestinian office, Gerald Rockenschaub, told AFP this week that Israeli restrictions and political tensions have caused Gaza's health facilities to deteriorate over the past decade.

Gaza has only 60 intensive care (ICU) beds for its two million people and not all are operational due to staff shortages, he said.

In response to the pandemic, Israel has announced an increased supply of medical equipment to Gaza, including hundreds of COVID-19 test kits transferred this week.

Hamas authorities are also working to build up to 1,000 new isolation rooms near the Rafah crossing with Egypt.

The Gaza director of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA, Matthias Schmale, told AFP this week that it would be "an illusion to think you can manage (an epidemic) in a closed-off space like this." "Everything I am hearing is if the outbreak reaches the magnitude where you need

more than 60 ICU beds to treat, it will become increasingly difficult and could well turn into a disaster of gigantic proportions," he said.

**Spain to boost coronavirus testing as deaths surpass 1,300**

Spanish authorities said that they would boost coronavirus testing, potentially with the help of robots, as the toll in the country kept climbing, surpassing 1,300 deaths and reaching close to 25,000 cases.

Europe's second-worst outbreak showed no sign of improvement as the single-day death toll jumped over 300 people from the previous day. Intensive care units kept filling up at a hectic pace in some hospitals.

Health officials said cases were likely to keep increasing and said they did not know when a peak would be reached. But they praised restrictions imposed a week ago by the government, which declared a 15-day state of emergency nationwide barring people from all but essential outings.

"We believe the social distancing measures are going to have an effect," Maria Jose Sierra, a top official at Spain's health emergency committee, said at a press briefing.

The death toll jumped to 1,326 from 1,002 the day before, according to Health Ministry data released on Saturday. The number of cases rose to 24,926 from 19,980.

The death rate is around 5 per cent, Sierra said, but she suggested the real rate is lower as testing has mostly been conducted on people in hospital, meaning there are far more cases than registered. —AFP

**How to avoid a fight when you're worried about COVID-19**

**LONDON:** I have lived with the same man for more than a quarter of a century. When we were younger and had more energy, we bickered so much that our friends called us George and Martha, the warring couple in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Age has dulled our edges and for years we have been in lockdown on all the most pressing issues: Brexit, climate change, Donald Trump, the latest iPhone.

Then came the coronavirus. Like a lot of other people, we have discovered we are on different sides of a faultline we never knew existed. In the face of a frightening pandemic, we behave differently. As the outbreak gathered pace the week before last, we were visiting our families in Australia.

One of us read obsessively about the virus, reaching for the phone in the middle of the night to monitor its advance and bounding from bed each morning to

check the television news. That would be me. "Oh god," I groaned one day. "The Johns Hopkins site has gone down." My other half, also a journalist, looked at me blankly. He had no idea the US university had a website charting the grim march of infection across the globe. Nor was he likely to any time soon.

He was keeping an eye on serious developments and texting worried friends locked down in Italy. But he was also sleeping soundly through the night, baffled by my rising anxiety about the muddled government responses to the outbreak in both Australia and our adopted home of Britain. A couple wearing masks to prevent contracting the coronavirus walks on an empty street at a shopping A couple wearing masks to prevent contracting the coronavirus walks on an empty street at a shopping district in Seoul, South Korea, March 12, 2020. REUTERS/Kim Hong-Ji

When I told him I was going to try to buy face masks in Melbourne for the flight home, he stared at me as if I had said I would be boarding the plane in a space suit. When I read that the divorce rate in one province in China, the first country to go into lockdown, had spiked when quarantined couples were finally freed, I was not surprised to see one official blaming it on all the housebound weeks together.

The row potential was clearly limitless. "You only washed your hands for five seconds!" "Your face mask is upside down!" "Are you actually trying to die?" So why are we reacting so differently? What does it say about each of us?

Some behavioural experts think our responses to crises are shaped mainly by experience. If we have lived through traumas, or trained to survive emergencies, then we are likely to be more calm and rational. —AFP

