



Hey playful parent!

My name is Casey and I am an early years teacher from Brisbane, Australia. I'm also a mother to three little learners of my own.

When I heard that many schools, daycare centres and play groups across the world were being closed for an indefinite amount of time, I wanted to do something to help the parents that are feeling overwhelmed, worried and anxious during this uncertain time.

As a play advocate, I wanted to take a moment to remind you that you don't need to follow a curriculum during this time. You don't need to provide structured lesson plans or set a schedule that replicates school or daycare. Your only job during this time is to love on those little people that you get to spend your days with right now and put one foot in front of the other.

I wanted to be able to support my community with simple play ideas to help ease some of the anxiety around what is happening right now. My hope is that this document will give you some playful ideas that will allow you to focus on filling the emotional bucket of your little learner through playful activities. These ideas will allow you to connect through play and create some magical memories while you're at it.

If you think this resource would help a fellow parent or the parents in your class or school, please feel free to forward the document on!

Ready to get playful? Let's do this!

Casey





playful learning at home for babies

Use the hashtag #littlifelonglearners on Instagram to connect with other playful parents!

<p>Make a colour bath by adding a few drops of food colouring to the bath water. Add some cups and bowls and invite your little learner to explore freely. This is a great way to break up the day and reset cranky babies!</p>	<p>Make a simple story basket with your baby's favourite book and 2-3 matching toys. For example, a touch and feel Koala book could have a stuffed Koala and a sensory bottle filled with eucalyptus leaves. A book about a teddy could have a little toy teddy and a blanket added to the basket.</p>	<p>Create a colour sensory basket full of interesting objects for your baby to explore. You might choose the colour red and add red balls, a red cup, a toy crab and a red picture book.</p>	<p>Add some musical instruments to a basket and invite your little learner to make as much noise as they can! You might even like to add some pots and pans and a wooden spoon from the kitchen if you're feeling brave!</p>	<p>Freeze some flowers and petals into ice cubes with water. Place them onto a shallow tray or highchair tray for your little learner to explore with their hands! You can also pop them inside a ziplock bag if you're worried about mouthing!</p>
<p>Expired cereals can be added to a sensory tub with some bowls and cups so your little learner can practice scooping and pouring with taste-safe materials. This is a great way to develop their hand-eye coordination and cause and effect.</p>	<p>Collect some flowers from the garden and place them inside a thick ziplock bag with some water. You can tape this to the floor with painter's tape. Alternatively, add them into a laminating pouch, using an iron or hair straightener to seal the edges. Your little learner will love exploring the flowers inside!</p>	<p>Tape a piece of clear contact to the wall with some painter's tape with the sticky side facing out! Invite your little learner to stick loose parts onto the contact. They can stick feathers, light foam blocks, light puzzle pieces and even pom poms to the contact paper. This is a great one to encourage your little learner to stand and squat as they play and explore.</p>	<p>Add some plastic balls or rubber ducks to a shallow tub of water. Invite your little learner to explore. You can add a drop or two of food dye to colour the water too. Blue water makes the perfect 'duck pond.'</p>	<p>Put a big unfolded cardboard box outside on the lawn and invite your little learner to paint onto the cardboard box! You can squirt some washable paints onto the box, strip your baby down to a nappy and watch them explore and create with their whole body!</p>
<p>Use painter's tape or washi tape to stick favourite toys down to the high chair. This is a wonderful way to develop the pincer grip, fine motor skills and problem solving skills as your little learner attempts to free the toys.</p>	<p>Make a batch of jelly by following the instructions on the box. Before placing it in the fridge to set, add a few link toys or animal figurines to the jelly. Once set, your baby can rescue their toys from the set jelly!</p>	<p>Tape a recycled toilet paper tube to the wall with painter's tape and invite your little learner to post small toys into the tube. You can experiment by placing the tubs vertically down the wall and also on different angles. This one is best suited to older babies/toddlers.</p>	<p>Create your own posting container by cutting a round hole in the top of a box or plastic container (lining with washi tape to keep edges safe). Have your little learner post balls or toys into the hole! This is perfect for babies over 8 months of age.</p>	<p>Make some rainbow themed sensory bottles by using loose parts from your craft stash! Fill each bottle with a different colour using buttons, pom poms, paddle pop sticks and beads inside.</p>



playful learning at home for kids

Use the hashtag #littlifelonglearners on Instagram to connect with other playful parents!

<p>Cut up a packet of straws and add them to a bowl. Your little learner can thread them onto a pipe cleaner. You can also stick skewers into some play dough and invite your little learner to thread the straws onto the skewers.</p>	<p>Make a flower sensory tub by adding some flowers and leaves from the garden to a big tub of water. Add some ladles, wooden spoons and a few drops of floral essence to delight the senses! You might like to add some bowls and containers.</p>	<p>Write your child's name on a piece of paper using a highlighter. Your little learner can then trace the letters of their name inside the highlighter letters! This is great for working on letter formation.</p>	<p>Freeze some water into a large container overnight. Dip the frozen container into a warm sink to loosen the ice from the container and tip onto a tray. Invite your little learner to use watercolour paints to paint onto the ice.</p>	<p>Place some painter's tape on the ground in different patterns (straight lines, zig zags, dashed lines, shapes) for your little learner to balance along. You could ask them to walk, jump and hop along the lines!</p>	<p>Create a small world invitation by setting up some animal toys, people or even toy cars in a new and exciting way ready for your little learner to discover. Take them outside for something different!</p>	<p>Check out Cosmic Kids Yoga on Youtube for kid-friendly yoga demonstrations that your little learners will love. They are especially useful for calm down time after playing outside in the afternoons.</p>
<p>Head out into the garden and make some mud pies! Add a pair of scissors and some bottles of water (coloured with food dyes) and invite your little learner to make their own mud recipes!</p>	<p>Build towers from blocks. Ask your little learner to build with 8 blocks and then ask them to build a tower with 8 blocks that is different to the first. Take photos of their different creations.</p>	<p>Trace patterns onto a sheet of paper (like wavy lines, zigzag lines, spiral shapes etc) and then invite your little learner to dip a cotton bud into paint and dot along the lines you've drawn.</p>	<p>Set up a baby clinic with baby dolls, blankets and wraps and some simple items from your medicine cabinet like bandages, empty medicine syringes, paddle pop sticks and a set of scales.</p>	<p>Place some coloured cardboard on the floor (a piece for each different colour) and invite your little learner to find objects from around the house to sort onto each sheet of paper.</p>	<p>Collect a variety of art loose parts and present them to your little learner with some scrap paper, scissors and glue. Invite your little learner to collage freely.</p>	<p>Draw different patterns onto coloured cardboard for your little learner to cut along. Draw curvy lines, zigzag lines, long straight lines and lots of short straight lines.</p>
<p>Freeze little toys like animal figurines into a bowl of ice for your little learner to excavate with a small hammer. You may have to freeze half and then add more water to freeze the next half so the toys don't float to the top.</p>	<p>Use rolled up balls to throw into carefully placed basket 'targets' – this is a great way to develop hand-eye coordination! You could have a point system for specific baskets and tally up the points as you go!</p>	<p>Add some sponges and containers to a tub of warm, soapy water. Your little learner can practise squeezing the sponges to fill the containers with water. This is a great way to strengthen the muscles in their hand.</p>	<p>Have a colour bath! Add a few drops of food colouring to the bath water and add some washable toys, bowls and cups. For example, a red bath might have some red balls, red bowls, red cups and some red DUPLO blocks!</p>	<p>Make a sensory small world in your sink! If you have some artificial plants and some little animal figurines, add them with a drop of food dye in the water of the sink to finish off your sensory small world in a sink.</p>	<p>Write different letters onto a piece of paper and then copy the same letters onto coloured dot stickers. Invite your little learner to match the stickers to the letters written on the paper. You can do this with numbers, sight words and shapes too!</p>	<p>Create a nature cutting tray by filling a tub with leaves, twigs, grass and flowers all foraged from the garden. Invite your little learner to use scissors to cut the natural loose parts, working their fine motor skills.</p>



playful learning at home for babies

Use the hashtag #littlifelonglearners on Instagram to connect with other playful parents!

<p>Make play dough together using the recipe found here. Can you make a long snake? A short snake? Can you make your name with play dough? Add some cupcake liners, candles and beads to make play dough cupcakes!</p>	<p>Cut out shapes of various sizes and colours from cardboard. Invite your little learner to make shape collages. Can you make shape robot? Invite them to count how many of each shape they used for their robot.</p>	<p>Save cardboard boxes, egg cartons and other recyclable food packaging to create a construction bucket. Invite your little learner to make their own cardboard box town. Find some inspiration here.</p>	<p>Have your own sports contest in the backyard. See who can jump the furthest; count how many star jumps they can do in 1 minute; create an obstacle course with rope to balance on, chairs to climb under and towels as jumping pads.</p>	<p>Fill a tub with water and add a splash of food colouring. Invite your little learner to scoop and pour using measuring cups from your kitchen drawer. Add different coloured water in bottles to explore colour mixing.</p>	<p>Cut a piece of string for your little learner. Invite them to find things around the house that are shorter and longer than the string. Draw pictures of the items that were shorter on one half of a piece of paper and the longer items on the other half.</p>	<p>Make an underwater cave using an old sheet. Create ocean animals with paper plates, recycled boxes and cardboard rolls. Paint paper plate fish and make seaweed with crepe paper. Read ocean books & watch National Geographic videos.</p>
<p>Go on a nature hunt in your backyard – use different vocabulary words! I'm looking for something that is <i>green</i>! I'm looking for something that <i>floats</i> when you drop it. I'm looking for something that feels <i>bumpy</i>.</p>	<p>Read a picture book and have your little learner draw and write about their favourite part. You could ask them to come up with an alternative ending and draw/write that.</p>	<p>Collect some leaves from nature that have interesting veins! Have your little learner paint the back of each leaf and then print onto some cardboard or paper to use as wrapping paper.</p>	<p>Cut out pictures of people from magazines and invite your little learner to write stories about them. You could add speech bubbles and invite your child to imagine what they might be saying.</p>	<p>Go on a treasure hunt! Write simple clues using familiar sight words to lead your little learner from one place to the next. Have a special morning tea hidden at the end of the hunt!</p>	<p>Invite your little learner to draw a picture of your family and label each person. Have them write about their favourite activities to do together as a family and staple it into a little book.</p>	<p>Bake some cupcakes together. Have your little learner measure out and count the ingredients as they're added. Have them scoop the mix into the muffin pan too. This is a wonderful measurement activity!</p>
<p>Make a donut shop by decorating cardboard donuts with paint or markers. Have your little learner make their own pretend money and open their own donut shop! This is wonderful for oral language skill and early money concepts.</p>	<p>Make your own grocery shop using items from your pantry. Make your own price tags and money. Invite your little learner to role-play working at the grocery store. You can download a free packet of signs here.</p>	<p>Write a letter to a loved one and post it in the mail or drop in in their mailbox if they live close by! You could also take a photo of the letter and send it via email or social media if you don't have any stamps.</p>	<p>Print photos from a recent family holiday or event and have your little learner write sentences (or a story) to match each photo. Bind it together into a family memory book.</p>	<p>Write sight words on a piece of paper with white crayon. Invite your little learner to paint watercolours over the top to reveal the hidden words underneath! They can also cut letters out of the newspaper or magazines to make their sight words.</p>	<p>Use old toilet paper rolls to create your own people for imaginative play. Use scrap materials, patty pan cases, cardboard and wrapping paper to make clothes for your people.</p>	<p>Choose an animal to research and make a poster with 5 interesting facts! Your little learner can draw a picture of their chosen animal and label it. You might like to help them research using National Geographic videos on Youtube or websites.</p>