

Some practical tips and tricks for home-based learning, during the current school closure.

Free writing

Many pupils will be familiar with the concept of “free writing” and may have a special notebook or journal in which they write freely about any topic of choice, and in any genre. This is a simple idea that can be continued in the home setting. Children have the autonomy to decide what they wish to write about and there are a variety of different styles that they can practice:

- Diary writing (personal accounts)
- Recount writing (a report of an event)
- Fiction (short stories)
- Instructional writing (e.g. rules of a game *the children can even come up with a new idea and create their own game!)
- Poetry (Limericks, acrostic poems etc.)

<https://storybird.com/member-family-plan> (offer a free 7-day trial)

<https://www.mystorybook.com/>

Letter writing

Post from a pen-pal and the anticipation of awaiting the arrival of a response may be lost in our global world where social media has taken over the art of writing, but this may be the time to resurrect that magic!

Another interesting idea is to chart the journey of a letter from the writer to the recipient. *An Post* have an educational resource on their website <https://www.anpost.ie/anpost/schoolbag/primary/our+people/the+journey+of+your+mail/>

Children can also design their own stamp or begin a collection of stamps and look out for special commemorative stamps that were commissioned by An Post to celebrate a particular occasion.

Lists

If parents are venturing out to shop and stock up on groceries, children can help by writing the list of what is needed. Depending on the age of the child, elements of mathematics could be incorporated here estimating prices and weights etc. Children could also work out which option is better value (e.g. two individual boxes containing 80 teabags or one box with 160 etc.)

Book review

We all know that a grá for reading is one of the most important gifts that we can pass on to our children. Use this opportunity to read a wide selection of books. Children can then write a review, give their personal opinion, talk about their favourite character and give a star rating. They may have a chance to present this in front of an audience in their own home (i.e. immediate family – maintain social distance!)

https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Time_to_Read_Int_04_0.pdf

Caint agus cómhra

Bí ag caint as Gaeilge chomh minic as is féidir!

Try to incorporate Irish into daily activities. As well as cartoons on TG4, children can play games such as “I spy” (Feicim le mo shúilín) as Gaeilge and perhaps put labels (lipéid) on items around the house. There are some useful websites online to support the learning of Irish (mar shampla Duo Lingo agus Seomra Ranga).

Cooking and baking (weight and time)

- How many / how much of an ingredient is needed?
- If a recipe is to serve 2 but the meal is for four people, we must double the amount.
- If the dish takes 45 minutes to cook, what time will it be ready at?
- Make an analogue clock.
- Convert time on an analogue clock to digital time.

Shape Hunt

A “shape hunt” in the home / garden (shape and space strand in primary maths curriculum). Children identify and classify as many items as possible.

Time (schedules)

Children can look at a tv guide from a newspaper and work out duration of programmes.

Distance

Children can incorporate distance into football / hurling drills. How far do they think (estimate) they can throw a ball? Use a measuring tape to obtain an accurate answer.

Project work

Children can work on a longer-term project based on a theme of their choice.

A scrap book is ideal, and children can cut and paste articles, pictures, diagrams and pieces of writing.

Other children may prefer to use their IT skills and create a PowerPoint presentation.

Interviewing

Children can devise a list of questions for a member of their family / wider family circle. For example, with grandparents / aunts / uncles they could explore aspects of the past (school life / pastimes / festivals and traditions around Easter etc.). This can link nicely with the “Then and Now” strand of the History curriculum.

If possible, where children can communicate with grandparents via phone / facetime / skype this is a good way of keeping contact during this period where circumstances dictate that they must not visit older relatives.

Creative arts

Most homes will have a “bits-and-bobs” box or a *bosca* somewhere with nets, buttons, lids, wrapping paper etc. Now is a good time to use those recyclables and create a piece of artwork. Children should be encouraged to be original, be creative – and don’t forget to take a picture!

Outdoors / physical activity

There are endless opportunities for physical activity. Even if children are playing on their own or in very small groups, there are many fun ways of keeping active:

- Hopscotch
- Skipping
- Hula-hoops
- Obstacle courses
- Treasure hunts

Local GAA clubs and county teams have been posting videos on their social media outlets with some of their star players demonstrating drills that children can follow.

Nature walks

This is one for parents and children. It is so important to remember to get active and get outdoors to open spaces.

Incorporate science, geography, oral language, drama and music into a walk whether it’s in a nearby park, along a beach or in the countryside.

Back to basics – other enjoyable, but educational activities

- Board games
- Card games
- Lego
- Jenga
- Jigsaws
- Flying a kite
- Memory games (e.g. stop the clock with one letter of the alphabet and come up with words beginning with a specific letter under certain headings such as boy name; girl name; country / city; food; item of clothing; activity; kitchen utensil etc.)
- Recreate “Countdown” television programme with word puzzles and maths problems.
- Painting

Online resource bank for primary school level

Scoilnet.ie

A very useful online forum with a wide array of resources (emphasis on free tools). Resources are organised into theme pages and the website is easy to navigate.

Twinkl.ie

Created by teachers, ideal for home education, it has lots of appealing games, stories, worksheets etc. It is offering a free month’s subscription (enter offer code: IRLTWINKLHELPS).

Cúla4.com

A collection of resources as Gaeilge – cláir, fiseáin, cluichí, tomhais agus srl.

Ask about Ireland

A treasure trove of resources with an Irish interest, focusing on our national culture.

Padlet.ie

A collection of tools, apps, ideas and sites to support Irish Primary pupils working at home, compiled by Ciara Reilly primary-school teacher and lecturer in education with Marino Institute.

MúinteoirLOI

Another resource created by primary school teacher Tom O’Connor which is ideal for anyone who has a house full of League of Ireland fans this morning. Free themed lessons focused on Irish soccer clubs.

Go Noodle

Movement and mindfulness videos created by child development experts.

Scratch

Learn to programme interactive games, stories and animations.

Khan Academy

Non-profit site with provides free video tutorials in maths and reading.

IXL.com

Subscription-based learning experience that provides curriculum-aligned maths and English content from junior infants up to sixth year.

National Geographic Kids

Learn about science, geography and history.

Nasa Kids' Club

Child-friendly resource where kids can learn about science and space.

I am an Artist

A visual arts initiative comprising 30 short TV programmes (each 6 minutes in length), an interactive website with slideshows, lessons, weblinks and interactive games, providing a stimulating collection of curriculum-mapped resources.