

THE VIRUS: TIPS FOR KEEPING BUSY

101

ways to entertain
the whole family
AND learn
something
new too!



STUCK in the house and already bored with this self-isolating lark?

You're missing your bingo and dying for a pint in the pub. The kids are killing each other and you're heading for divorce. And the days when the supermarket aisles were packed with toilet paper seem a distant memory.

So, to help you out, here's the second day of our great guide of 101 things to do to stop you climbing the walls during the coronavirus crisis.

Today, we focus on the unusual hobbies you could take up to help pass the time...

1. Dance

You know what they say: sing and dance like nobody's watching. And right now, that could not be more true.

So why not learn a new dance?

Whether it's the foxtrot or the funky chicken, you will find hundreds of tutorials online - YouTube is a good place to start - to do on your own or with your cooped-up family.

You may feel silly to start with but it will keep you active and we bet you have a good time once you get going.

Vicki Marks is a personal trainer who runs vickipt.com. She says: "Dancing is great - you use more muscles than you think, especially the tummy. Not only do you burn heaps of calories, you release happy hormones."

2. Collectables

Choosing something you really love is the key to successful collecting - be that stamps, vinyl records or hats.

And four out of five Brits have given it a go at some point.

Collectables expert Tracy Martin's passion began as a child, when her father would buy her Bunnykins figurines.

She says: "Before I knew it the bunnies had bred like rabbits and I have hundreds of them."

"Depending on what you collect, you can learn so much from it. If you collect Victoriana, for example,



you're learning the social history behind things." Tracy says virtual auctions on websites such as thesaleroom.com can be a good way to research your items.

Just be careful when buying online.

Tracy advises: "Bombard people with questions and look at the seller's feedback if you can. Then when you receive the items, check them carefully."

Tracy adds that it's a labour of love, not just a financial investment. She says: "It's pointless spending money on something you have no interest in. I love fashion so I look at vintage clothes, handbags and shoes."

For more tips visit collectablesexpert.co.uk.

3. Learn to play chess

Now is the moment to finally invest the time and learn your rook from your knight.

If you're on your own, Facetime a friend who also has a board, or sign up to one of the many chess apps out there.

There's no shortage of competition, at all levels.



4. Make your own beer

The pubs are shut, there's only one thing for it - make your own beer! It doesn't have to be expensive and can be ready in 4-5 weeks, by which time you may be very glad of it.

Find starter kits on notonthehighstreet.com or from specialist suppliers such as the-home-brew-shop.co.uk for around £60 for a 40-pint kit.



5. Make gin

Let's face it, most of us need a drink during these strange days.

If you find shops have sold out of gin, you could always learn to make your own.

The Craft Gin Club (www.craftginclub.com) said: "For a spirit that is so complex, nuanced and diverse, gin in its most basic form is pretty straightforward.

"The only real stipulation for it to be called gin is there is juniper as the dominant botanical and it is at least 37.5% ABV.

"Beyond that, the world is your oyster."

YOU NEED

- 700ml bottle of good quality vodka (we used a rye vodka)
- Two tablespoons of juniper berries
- Six cardamom pods
- Two peppercorns
- One teaspoon of coriander seeds
- Strip of lemon peel/orange peel - or both

INSTRUCTIONS

Pour everything into your bottle of vodka and leave it for a day to infuse, then strain it through a sieve and you're all set.

Add other things you like to make your own artisan gin.



6. Wine taste like a pro

There's every chance those wine stocks could be taking a hammering soon, so why not try to drink the right wine with the right food?

Whether you've got a chardonnay, a chablis, a malbec or a merlot tucked away, The Wine Society thewinesociety.com has a simple three-step guide to tasting.

Finally, a skill that will be of real use when all this is over...

7. Learn to make cocktails

Did you watch Tom Cruise in Cocktail (another great activity if you haven't yet done so) and then race out to buy a "how to make a margarita" book?

Well, dig it out from the back of the shelf and investigate all those random bottles in the back of the cupboard.

Steve the Bartender on YouTube will get the party started, or log on to his website, stevebartender.com.au, where you'll find plenty of easy recipes.

Consider downloading a group video chat app like Zoom or Houseparty so you can invite all your friends... virtually.



8. Pick up an instrument

Calling all guitars and keyboards gathering dust in the corner of your spare room... your moment has come.

There's no shortage of online tutorials, whether it's Led Zeppelin or Lewis Capaldi you're after.

Colourmylearning.com's Sidrah Qayyum says: "Music is food for the soul. There is no age limit. Whether you're a newbie or revisiting an instrument after a lifetime, thanks to the internet it has become really easy to learn at your own pace."

YouTube is a great starting point but the best advice is to learn something you love to hear.

9. Do a puzzle

A great way to keep your mind sharp and involve both young and old in a joint activity.

And there's probably one in the loft you haven't seen for years.

If not, choose from a huge selection at jigsawpuzzlesdirect.co.uk.

Although they are dealing with increased orders so could take a while.

Puzzles are super-addictive and a good way to relax, so turn off the TV and avoid the depressing news.



10. Model railways

If it's good enough for Rod Stewart then maybe we should all give it a go. Assuming you've got enough space now you're stuck inside.

If you don't have one gathering dust in the garage, you can start building one from scratch.

Hornby have lots of kits on their website, hornby.com.

Laurie Calvert, a member of the Romford Model Railway Society, says: "Model railways are a wonderful hobby but it's dying out with the older generation. We need to let people know and inspire them to give it a go."

You can start as small or as big as you like, depending on your space.

But why not build one and encourage younger members of your family to try it too?

Become a magician

OK, you might not turn into Houdini in a fortnight but you can definitely start trying out some magic tricks.

From sleight-of-hand to bigger illusions, it all starts with a vanishing coin. Get starters' tips from magicshop.co.uk and you'll soon be conjuring up smiles.

Practice makes perfect... and now there's no excuse not to put in the time.



12. Make your own toys

The kids might be getting bored of playing with the toys they have at home. So why not set a day aside to make your own?

They'll be left feeling chuffed with their creations.

A good one to try first is play dough.

All you need is flour, water, vegetable oil and salt, plus your choice of food colouring.

You'll have fun making it together and then the kids will have hours of fun afterwards.



13. Make an instrument

You could also spend some time making your own musical instruments with the kids.

Let's face it, we all need music to get us through these challenging times. For a homemade maraca,

all you'll need to do is fill a plastic bottle with some rice.

For other ideas, visit activityvillage.co.uk.



14. Scalextric

With most sports off for the foreseeable, now is the ideal time to bring motorsports into your living room.

If you've got a car-mad youngster or are a motoring enthusiast, getting a Scalextric set and having races with the whole family could be the perfect way to get through the days.

You may even have one from your childhood you could dig out - kids would love seeing the toys you played with when you were younger.

The sets are more advanced nowadays but they're still good fun. For more information and to buy

yourself a set, visit scalextric.com



15. Lego

Anyone with kids is sure to have piles of Lego at home. But it doesn't have to be just for the kids - David Beckham is known to love it!

If you can get your hands on some (Smyths are still delivering at the moment, visit smythstoys.com), why not have a daily Lego challenge? See who can build the best castle or dragon. Or just let your imagination go crazy and build whatever you want.

Kids and adults alike will love it and the good thing is, you can do something different every day.

16. Learn a language

It's never too late to learn a new language, so why not take the opportunity of weeks of self-isolation to get started on it?

When we are able to say bonjour to holidays again, it could come in useful.

Log on to duolingo.com for lots of tips and advice.



17. Learn to play cards

Grab that deck of cards from the drawer and learn how to play a new card game, such as whist.

YouTube has lots of videos showing you how to play a huge variety of games.

You could make it more fun by giving the loser a forfeit like doing all the washing up.



children.org.uk