

Ideas for Keeping Kids Engaged on Virtual Visits

Remember: You are still in control of your visit and you are doing your best to keep a child engaged. This is a new situation and it will be difficult for many kids to understand how to talk to you through the screen.

However, it can be done!

You can lead the activity on the visit call so that it is a productive time and the child keeps positive memories! The main idea is to maintain your bond with your child. Foster parents are willing to help; we need to work together to make these visits work well.

1-2 years old:

- Sing songs/lullabies to them
- Read a book to them with pictures
- Play peek a boo
- If foster parent is feeding them/it's time for snack, share a snack together. You can still talk to them and be engaged ("Open up wide, here comes to goldfish!")
- GET ACTIVE! For those already walking, play some music and dance around, see if they will dance too. Have them crawl and make different animal sounds ("What does a cat say?")

3-7 years old:

- Story time: read a book to them (give clear directions like you would during a visit...ex: "Sit crisscross applesauce and Mom will start the book!")
- Singing songs—make up motions for the songs and have the child do what you're doing
- Play "Simon Says"—you be the leader (Simon says, put your hands on your head...Simon says do 5 jumping jacks...Simon says wiggle like a noodle)
- GET ACTIVE! You can use jumping jacks, frog jumps, pushups, "snow angels," dancing, etc. to get them moving! You suggest the next movements to stay in control of the activity.
 - For younger ones, you can use animals to do this: jump like a frog 10 times, hop on one leg like a flamingo, crawl on all fours like a lion, etc.
- Play "red light green light" indoors. Ask them to start at one end of the living room and you call out "green light!" or "red light" (make sure they know not to run, etc. and be unsafe)
- Draw a picture together—get a marker/paper and have the foster parent get some crayons/paper out. Kids can focus on talking more if their hands are working on something
- Play Tour Guide: ask to show you a room in the house (if you can make this work with the video)
- Share a snack together (talk to foster parent first)—this will feel normal to them like they are in a visit.
- Go on a scavenger hunt—Give kids a list of items and ask them to hunt for them in the house (must be appropriate, ex. Favorite t-shirt, toothbrush, red item in pantry, a blue lego, a book that starts with the letter "S" etc.)
- Help with homework/talk about virtual school. There are a lot of changes happening, so check in and see how you can help! Ask to see their worksheets, etc.

8-12 years old

- Help with homework/talk about virtual school. There are a lot of changes happening, so check in and see how you can help!
- Draw a picture together—get a marker/paper and have the foster parent get some crayons/paper out. Kids can focus on talking more if their hands are working on something.
 - Challenge: Draw a simple picture and hold it up, like a face with just eyes/mouth—ask kids to draw the same picture and add something to it—switch back and forth adding one change each time for the other person to copy
- Play Tour Guide: ask to show you a room in the house (if you can make this work with the video)
- Story time: read a book to them. If you have a chapter book that is appropriate, you could do 1-2 chapters per visit and they can listen.
- GET ACTIVE! Do a “kid friendly” workout with them. You can use jumping jacks, frog jumps, pushups, “snow angels,” dancing, etc. to get them moving! You suggest the next movements to stay in control of the activity.
 - For younger ones, you can use animals to do this: jump like a frog 10 times, hop on one leg like a flamingo, crawl on all fours like a lion, etc.
- Play charades—write down different movies, people, animals, etc. and pull one out of a hat for each turn. On the kid’s turn, pull something out of the hat and hold it up to the screen so they can see it but you can’t. Take turns acting them out with each other and having the other person guess.
- Go on a scavenger hunt—Give kids a list of items and ask them to hunt for them in the house (must be appropriate; ex. Favorite t-shirt, toothbrush, red item in pantry, blue Lego, etc.)
- Take a walk outside while you talk. If you are both able to (Wifi/data can be used outside the house), take a walk around the neighborhood while you talk.
 - You can make a nature-themed scavenger hunt out of this as well (find a clover, find a flower, etc.)!

13-16 years old

- Help with homework/talk about virtual school. There are a lot of changes happening, so check in and see how you can help!
- Draw/sketch together.
- Play charades—write down different movies, people, animals, etc. and pull one out of a hat for each turn. On the kid’s turn, pull something out of the hat and hold it up to the screen so they can see it but you can’t. Take turns acting them out with each other and having the other person guess.
- GET ACTIVE! Do a “virtual workout” together...you can play an actual workout video or make up your own. Activity is good for reducing anxiety!
- Share a snack together (talk to foster parent/placement first)
- Try a hair-braiding/hair-do tutorial together (learn how to French braid your own hair, etc.)