



Virtual Mentoring Toolkit

for Bigs & Families

The decision to meet in-person needs to be determined as a result of careful consideration and discussion within your match. The "right" time to resume in-person contact will be different for each family and each volunteer. To account for the health and safety of our program participants, we are requiring that all participants review our Match Guidelines for Meeting in Person and discuss with their Match Support Specialist prior to meeting for an outing.

For virtual outings and contact, below you'll find our **Virtual Mentoring Toolkit**. We continually update this toolkit. This will provide you a wide range of ways you can engage your Little, even though you will be meeting virtually rather than in person. We encourage you to review these resources and chat with your Match Support Specialist to help develop a plan on how best to approach your relationship with your Little.

Big Brothers Big Sisters will continue to be singularly focused on partnering with you to meet the needs of the youth we serve that may go unmet in their schools and communities.

Amidst so much turmoil and disruption, one thing is clear: **Our Little Brothers and Sisters need us now more than ever**. We here at Big Brothers Big Sisters are ready and willing to provide you with the tools and resources you need to continue to provide that love, support, and guidance.



Not being able to see your Little face-to-face will present some new challenges to your relationship, but following the tips below will help you navigate through these difficulties while continuing to help your Little reach their highest potential.

- Rely on regular phone calls and text messages, or video chats via FaceTime or WhatsApp to stay connected with your Little. Use this resource or this resource for great conversation starters for kids and check out this resource or this resource to get chatting with teens!
- Messenger Kids (from Facebook) is a great way to safely connect with your Little via a social media platform, while keeping their parent looped in. Here's more on how it works.
- Snail mail - *still a thing!* Write letters to your Little (become pen pals!), send postcards, a homemade card, pass along some print-at-home games (like these puzzles or these coloring pages), or send them a homemade craft (like these bracelets, or one of these quick/easy kids crafts).
- **STAY CONSISTENT! However you choose to connect, your consistency is more important to your Little now more than ever.** Find days, times, and methods that work best for both of you, create a plan, set a schedule, and stick to it! This will make it easier on you both, while giving you each something to look forward to and depend on.
- **ASK QUESTIONS!** It's no surprise that everyone's day-to-day schedule is experiencing incredible upheaval. Reaching out and chatting with your Little and their parent/guardian about when is best to reach out, what days and time are easiest, and how you can help are questions that will be enormously helpful for you (and your Little!) in staying connected.



To get you started, here are a few Match Activity ideas that you can dive into with your Little!

- Develop a talent, skill, or passion together! There is a ton of experts creating exceptional online content right now that can help you and your Little learn to draw or doodle, perfect an in-home workout, practice ballet, become a scientist, explore the world, become a great cook, learn a second (or third!) language, become a yogi, or learn how to dance!
- Don't hesitate to day-dream! Plan future activity ideas you two might do together once it's safer to move about in the community. Check out this website, and this one too for great activities and attractions to check out locally.
- Have a Movie night! Plan to watch the same movie and discuss via phone or text message either during or after. Make sure to get movie selection approved by parent/guardian and here are some great questions (though you'll have to swap the word 'book' for 'movie') to get you going.

- Looking for an educational movie or documentary? There are thousands available on Kanopy or Hoopla that are free with a library card!
- Watch a virtual concert together! There are a ton of artists who are hopping on the bandwagon and hosting virtual and free concerts for their fans! Here's a list from NPR that might be helpful.
- Start a cooperative journal by using a platform like Story Bird or Google Docs to document the day-to-day. This example provides a great format for this.
- Have a virtual book club! You can read to your Little via FaceTime, WhatsApp, Skype, or Zoom, or plan to read the same book and discuss with each other. Here are some great book ideas to get started and here's some tips on how to get the conversation going.
 - Have a library card? Libby is a great resource for accessing downloadable free e-books!
- Schedule an activity to virtually check out a museum or visit a zoo together! Check out Zoom for an easy way to share your screen and explore together!
- Does your Little like to build? Purchase duplicate Lego sets or jigsaw puzzles and send one to both you and your Little. Share your progress by sending photos via text message and see who can complete their project first!
- Schedule game time! Using app-based games like Words with Friends, Draw Something, Chess (click here for the web version), Checkers, or Bowling can be great ways to engage and connect with your Little, while enjoying some down time. Check out this website (and this one too!) for great games you and your Little can play on laptops or desktops.
- Does your Little have virtual homework assignments they're trying to tackle? Offer to lend a helping hand! Whether it's a book report, an algebra lesson, or anything else you can be incredibly helpful in assisting your Little in transitioning to digital learning.



We know many Bigs will be focused on helping stem the tide of learning loss while their Littles are spending time at home. Check out the resources below to help your Little stay sharp and continue to focus on their academics from home.

- Khan Academy offers a FREE library of trusted, standards-aligned practice and lessons covering math K-12 through early college, grammar, science, history, AP, SAT, and more. They are also offering daily learning schedules for kids throughout the crisis.
- Common Sense has a bunch of great (and free!) education websites and apps that kids can access (with parent permission!) to help stem the tide of learning loss. Check them out here for more info and find what resource might be best for your Little!

- Check out Class Central for a free list of online classes that range from computer science and business, to arts/design and engineering. This is best for middle/high-school age Littles.
 - Feeling ambitious and want to turn this into a Match Activity? Take the class alongside your Little!
- Is your Little interested in coding? Scratch was designed for children ages 8-16 and uses easy-to-use programming language to let kids build almost anything they can dream. There are no obscure lines of code here. Instead, arrange and snap together Scratch blocks as if they are virtual Legos!
 - Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Use Scratch right alongside your Little and venture through their online lessons together!
- Has there ever been a better time for podcasts? Check out this website to access funny, smart, and scientific podcasts that keep kids engaged.
 - Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Pick a podcast you both enjoy and listen along together! Then, after each episode, connect and discuss using slightly revised, book-club style questions.
- Do you have a teenager interested in public health or psychology? Here is a laundry list of resources that they can explore!
 - Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Pick a resource and explore it together. Or, have your Little review a specific resource they might be excited about and teach you about what they learned!
- Looking for a virtual lesson your Little (and your!) might find interesting? Check out the TakeLessons YouTube channel for lessons on singing, learning Spanish, learning sign language, playing piano, and much more!
 - Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Take the lesson right alongside your Little and learn together!
- Our friends at Scholastic offer day-by-day projects to keep kids in grades K-9 reading, thinking, and growing. These are updated each day and present four separate learning experiences, each built around a thrilling, meaningful story or video. Kids can do them on their own, with their families, or with their teachers. Just find your grade level and let the learning begin!
- Is your Little interested in writing? BoomWriter inspires children to write and develop important literacy skills, and our parent app will keep you 'In the loop' with your child's progress.
- Can't find something you like on the list above? Check out this website for a full list of educational companies offering free subscriptions.



We know many of our parents will be feeling the stress of supporting and providing for their children over the weeks and months to come. We wanted to be sure every Big had specific resources that might be helpful to pass along to parents who may turn to you for support:

- State of Illinois: You can find the latest info, cases, and updates on COVID-19 [here](#).
- NPR provides this helpful, interactive guide for how to chat with kids about COVID-19.
- Our friends over at Common Sense have some great videos and other resources that can help families to better understand what's going in the news and how to react to it, as well as stay calm and learn at home.
- Harvard Health put together a great article on how to talk to teenagers about COVID-19.
- The Child Mind Institute outlines some great resources and approaches on how to talk with younger kids about COVID-19. Here's another great article too from PBS.
- Need some family mindfulness amidst all the disruption? Ten Percent Happier has a bevy of resources and daily updates for families struggling to cope.
- Looking for activities? Here are 50 easy/cheap indoor activities to keep kids busy.
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network offers an incredible COVID-19 Coping Guide with specific strategies and recommendations for each age group.
- Need a refresher on how to properly wash hands? Here is a step by step guide to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases.



We have so many ideas for how to support you and your Little throughout the COVID-19 crisis. We will update this page often; check back for new ideas and **share your ideas with us!**

Help us by making sure we have the best email address and phone numbers for our volunteers, youth, and parents. More than ever, we want to make sure we can all stay connected and support each other.

Thank you for your commitment to helping a child in need during this challenging time. For children who are isolated, fearful and maybe just plain bored right now, your constancy and support can be the difference between regression and growth. **Thank you.**

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