

12 WAYS TO GIVE WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING:

A Do-It-At-Home Philanthropy Kit
for Kids and Families



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I. Introduction

What's Philanthropy?

Philanthropy is a big word that means giving to people, places, and good causes in your community. People think you have to have a lot of money to be a philanthropist, and that's not true. Everyone has something to give, and everyone can be a philanthropist.

Yes, even you, kids!

As a parent or caregiver, you are doing what you can to be thoughtful, caring, and responsible during COVID-19. Many parents and caregivers are looking for tools or ideas to not only fill the hours in the day, but also to use this experience as a teaching moment for their kids, and an opportunity to help others in their community. In good times and in difficult times, we can plant the seeds for new growth, learning, and possibilities—and the time is ripe to do so.

Giving as a family is a profound way to learn together and turn your concerns into action, even when limited by social distancing or shelter-in-place. As kids and as families, you have the power to make a difference anytime, anywhere, even from your own home or neighborhood.

This toolkit features 12 ideas for how you can give to others while maintaining a safe social distance. It works best for kids ages 5-12, although kids and adults of any age can find something useful in here. Read this together with your child, and start with one idea, or try a new one each week. The point is to do something good, be creative, and have fun as a family.



Note for Parents and Caregivers: Let Your Child Lead

When it comes to picking a giving activity, let your children do the choosing! Follow their lead on what interests them the most, and you will create a more satisfying and experience for all. Remember that you are the best role model for your kids—and they are always watching (even if you think they aren't). Show them how important it is to give to others by doing it with them.



II. 12 Ways to Give While Social Distancing

Your community needs you more than ever, and each of us has a role to play. What will yours be? Tell us what you did and post your photos online and tag us on Facebook @SocialDistanceGiving. Be sure to include the hashtags #SocialDistanceGiving and #HowWeHelp.

1. Neighbors helping neighbors. It's important to help out the people who live near us. Write a letter (or have your adult help you write a letter) to all your neighbors, whether you know them or not. Let them know that you care about them, and your family is there to help if they need anything. Ask them to call, text, or email your adult if they need groceries, prescriptions, or other kinds of support. Many neighborhoods are setting up a system for caring for people who need help. Check [NextDoor.com](https://www.nextdoor.com) or other neighborhood online lists to start a system or find out if there are people already working together on this.

2. Send thank you notes to those who are helping. Speaking of neighbors, Fred Rogers of Mr. Roger's Neighborhood once said "When I was a boy and I would see scary things on the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

There are many people helping right now: doctors, nurses, first responders (police, emergency workers, firemen and firewomen), and people who offer shelter, food, mail, garbage collection, and essential services to others. There are also grocery store employees and grocery delivery drivers who are staying open and bringing food to people's doors, and teachers who are learning new ways of doing their jobs so that kids can stay home. Everyone is playing their part to keep their community safe and healthy.



Who are the helpers in your community? Write them a note to say how much you appreciate what they are doing to serve the greater good. You can also applaud or sing a thank you song to delivery men and women who visit your doorstep or driveway!



- 3. Send cards, letters, and drawings to people who are alone or isolated.** At this time of social distancing, many older adults are missing visits from their family members and friends. You can write cards, letters, or drawings and mail them in bulk to a local nursing home, assisted living center, hospital, or our soldiers overseas (see [Operation Gratitude](#) for how to send to troops). Or you might know of a neighbor who lives by themselves. A letter of support can make someone's day.

TIP: It helps to pick one time of day, each day, that you write your notes (for example, right after lunch)—that way you'll stick with it. Some kids are even writing positive messages on their driveways or posting signs on their front doors to keep their neighborhood spirits up, such as "Stay Healthy!" or "You are Not Alone" or "We'll Get Through This Together." Younger kids can [draw pictures](#) to spread joy.

4. Donate food to those in need. Food banks (also called food pantries or food shelves) are places where you can donate canned or boxed food for people who cannot afford to buy what they need. In this time where many are finding it hard to go to grocery stores and food supplies are down, people in need are looking to food banks as a place to get food for free. You and your adult can drop off food or have it shipped to a food bank near you. Find your local food bank at [Feeding America](#).

You can also create brown-bag "snack packs" for homeless or struggling adults, or kids who regularly rely on school meals, and no longer have access to those meals. Some families are leaving fruit, snacks, or other items in their driveway or doorstep with a sign that says "Free Food for Those in Need." (If sharing food, be sure everyone in your home is healthy, symptom-free, and has practiced social distancing at home for at least 14 days.) You might take these snack bags to a local homeless or women's shelter if they are accepting them (some may have restrictions on this currently—ask your adult to call first).





Activity Idea: Snack Packs for the Hungry

You can choose any of the following to create Snack Packs for people in need:

- Brown paper bags
- Granola bars
- Fresh fruit or fruit cups
- Apple sauce or pudding
- Beef or other meat jerky
- Crackers and peanut butter/crackers and cheese packs
- Trail mix or nuts
- Chocolate or a small treat
- Bottled water or juice
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Hand sanitizer or wipes
- Tissue packs
- Optional: Gift card to a grocery store or coffee shop



- * Be sure not to include anything you make from home. Everything has to be pre-packaged or from a commercial kitchen.



5. Make DIY facemasks for hospitals or home use. Facemasks are important for keeping people healthy, especially those who work at hospitals and doctors' offices. Do you have a sewing machine? You can make facemasks at home to drop off to hospitals or give to your neighbors. [Joann Fabrics](#) is offering mask-making kits for customers, and is accepting completed masks to deliver to medical workers in need. Or you can make [these masks](#) with no sewing required.

TIP: If your family already has protective face masks or other needed healthcare supplies that you can spare, call your local hospitals or medical offices to find out how to donate. Many are accepting donations directly. Or go online to [MasksforDocs.com](#) to find out where you can donate locally.

6. Donate money or supplies. With your adult, contact your local homeless or women's shelter, or other community organizations that serve people in need. Look on their websites to see if they have posted "Wish Lists" for what they need, or call/email to ask them, and donate money or supplies to them directly. Many organizations accept donations online, or you can drop off or send supplies directly from online stores.

7. Make a gift or homemade art for someone and leave it at their door. You can collect flowers, paint rocks, or glue leaves in a design on a piece of thick paper or cardboard. If you're an older kid, you might want to do something more detailed and creative. Use your imagination! Or get ideas from



Pinterest and YouTube (see below for a few). You can include a note, or give it as an anonymous gift (where you keep the person guessing who gave it!).

Activity Idea: Nature Art



[Nature Art for Kids](#)

[Nature Art Therapy](#)

[5 Nature Crafts for Kids](#)

- 8. Give the gift of stories and song.** Video call a younger friend or family member, or a grandparent or elderly neighbor, and read them your favorite children's book. Or you can record a video of yourself reading or singing a song, and send it to them online. You might also make a list of your favorite stories and songs, and share it with your friends via social media or your class email list.
- 9. Give books.** Now that we're all spending more time indoors, kids and adults alike are looking for new books and magazines to read. As a simple yet appreciated way to give, you can donate your gently used books or magazines with others. Some communities have a Little Free Library set up in a neighbor's yard to share books.



Go through your books and decide which ones you want to donate. Even if you don't have a Little Free Library, you can make your own. All you need is a cardboard box, your donated books or magazines, and a sign that says "Free books—please help yourself!" Get creative.

TIP: Before you donate them, wipe down your books with disinfectant wipes. It can help to also leave a canister of wipes near your books so that people can wipe them down as well as they pick them up.

10. Beautify your surroundings. You can give to the Earth and your community while getting some exercise and fresh air. Walk around your backyard or neighborhood with a plastic bag, and pick up litter. You might wear plastic or cloth gloves (disposing or washing them afterward), and/or use a stick to pick up the litter from the ground. You can make a game of it—see if you can pick up the litter with one or two sticks (chop-sticks style) without dropping it!

11. Support local restaurants and other small businesses.

You might not think of buying something as a form of philanthropy, but in these times, it is! Many restaurants, coffee shops, and small businesses that your family regularly visits (hair salons, book stores, clothing stores, toy stores, pet stores) have had to temporarily close their doors. With your adult, you might choose a restaurant or store you would like to support. Buy a gift certificate for later use, or something that you could use while at home. Those small business owners and workers will appreciate your support in keeping them afloat!



Some restaurants are even using donated money from community members to prepare and deliver hot and healthy meals to healthcare workers.

12. Make a philanthropy vision board. You can make a vision board for how you would like to better your community or world, now and in the future. Use old magazines to find pictures, words, and/or phrases that inspire you and call you to action. What do you imagine your community will look like? How can you make it a better place? Cut out your pictures and glue or Mod Podge them to a poster board, piece of cardboard, or a piece of large paper. Do you have glitter, stickers, paint, crayons? Get as creative and as messy as you like! Once it's done, hang or place your vision board in a spot where you can see it every day. When school is back in session, share your community vision with your classmates.

TIP: Older kids can also use this [Blue Sky Envisioning Activity](#) from Learning to Give, which includes worksheets and brainstorming activities for students.



III. Learn More About Philanthropy

What's Philanthropy?

Philanthropy is a big word that means giving to people, places, and good causes in your community. People think you have to have a lot of money to be a philanthropist, and that's not true. Everyone has something to give, and everyone can be a philanthropist. Yes, even you, kids!

Ask yourselves:

1. When was a time when someone was kind or gave something to me or my family?
2. How did it feel to receive that kindness?

Activity Idea: What Kids Say

Watch this funny and inspiring video of [kids explaining the meaning of philanthropy.](#)



What Can You Give?

Often when people think about philanthropy, they immediately think of giving money. It's true, giving money is one of the most popular—and important—ways to “do” philanthropy. Yet it's not the only way to give. Here are four ways to give—called the 4Ts, for time, talent, treasure, and ties. (4Ts concept sourced from the [Time, Talent, Treasure, and Ties](#) tool of 2164.net.)

The 4Ts of Philanthropy: Time, Talent, Treasure, and Ties

Time: Your time is the most valuable gift you can give someone, because your time is yours alone! You can give your time to others in many ways—by keeping them company, by being kind, and by taking part in volunteer activities (meaning, activities you do by choice to help others).

Ask yourselves:

1. In what ways have I given my time in the past to help others?



2. What kinds of volunteer activities have we done, or would we like to do, as a family?



Talent: Everyone is good at something. What's your special talent? Figure out what you're good at, and use it to do good. Maybe you love to draw or write? You can draw pictures or write notes to lift the spirits of someone who is lonely. Maybe you play the piano, flute, or violin? Record a song and (with your parents help) send it to play for someone in a local hospital, nursing or assisted living home. Do you like to bake? Knit? Build things, or make crafts? Get creative, and do your best.

Ask yourselves:

1. What kind of skills and talents do I have? List three.



2. How can I use these skills and talents to help others, now or in the future?

Treasure: You might think of treasure as a pot of gold or chest of jewels. In this case, treasure means money, or something else you own that you donate to others, such as needed supplies, gently used toys, book, or clothes. These “non-money” donations are called “in-kind donations,” because you are donating from your heart, or kindness.

Even small amounts of money or can go far when many people give. What do you have saved in your piggy bank that you can share with others? Perhaps you can contribute a dollar or two to a pet shelter or food bank that had to close temporarily. Or perhaps you can do chores or open a “pretend restaurant” at home for your family, asking for donations that you can then share with others. If you don’t have any money to share now, you can plan what you would like to give in the future.





Ask yourselves:

1. What money or supplies can I donate to people or places in need?

2. Who or where would be the best place to donate to at this time?
How can I find out?

3. What kind of donations has my family made in the past? How did it feel to give?
(Or how can you imagine it would feel?)



Activity Idea: Save, Spend, Give

Look around your house or in your recycling bin for three small jars. Give them each one label that says: “Save,” “Spend,” and “Give.” Each time you get your allowance or any money, divide the money into these three jars. At the end of each month, choose where you would like to donate money in your “Give” jar. (See [Save. Spend. Give.](#) by Community First Foundation to learn more.)

Ties: You might think of “ties” as what your dad, brother, or caregiver has in their closet for work or special occasions. When it comes to philanthropy, your “ties” refer to your friends and the people you know. We all have people we know, and when we come together with others, we can do more than we can do alone.

In today’s digital world, with the help of your parents, it’s easy to connect with your classmates, your sports team, your groups, your neighbors, and more. If you have an idea on ways to help others, you can ask your friends to join you and take action. Sometimes all it takes is one person with one idea to inspire a movement—which means a change to make the world better! Perhaps you can inspire your classmates to make care packages, or with your parents, set up a GoFundMe page for someone in need and ask others to donate. There are many ways to give and help as a group.





Ask yourselves:

1. How many people do I know?
 - a. How many people are in my family? My extended family (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.)?
 - b. How many students are in my class or homeschool group?
 - c. How many students go to my school?
 - d. What activities do I take part in after school and on weekends (e.g., sports, dance, gymnastics, karate, clubs, learning activities)?
 - e. How many friends, teammates, or fellow students do I know in these groups?
 - f. How many people do I know in my neighborhood?
 - g. Who else do I know that are not listed above?





Now using your numbers above, count how many people you know (it's okay to make your best guess!): _____

2. What are the ways I can reach out to some or all of these people, even during social distancing?

3. What are some ideas I have for how I can bring a few (or many) of these people together to help others or do something good?

What's a Cause?

A cause is another word for an organization (called a nonprofit) or group of people doing good things in your community, town, city, or the world. Examples include organizations that feed and/or provide shelter for people; those that help solve health problems and care for people who are sick; those that educate kids and teach them to read; and those that take care of animals. On the next page is a list of the top 10 causes that people like to give to or volunteer. These aren't the only causes out there, simply the most well-known.



Ask yourselves:

- Which of the causes (below) feel most important to me?

- If I had \$20 to give to one of these causes, which would I choose and why?

Top 10 Popular Causes



Source: [VolunteerMatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org)



Activity Idea: Watch these Online Videos

Watch these two videos on YouTube:

[Philanthropy and Service Learning](#)

[How to Change the World](#)

Great job! See all the ways you can be a philanthropist?

When you share your time, talent, treasure, and ties, it's like planting that small seed that blossoms into something beautiful. Tell us what you did and post your photos online and tag us on Facebook @SocialDistanceGiving. Be sure to include the hashtags #SocialDistanceGiving and #HowWeHelp.



IV. Resources to Learn More

For Parents

- [Talking to Kids About Charity \(PBS Kids for Parents\)](#)
- [Generosity and Service Learning While Social Distancing](#)
- [18 At-Home Ideas to Keep Kids Busy and Entertained During the Coronavirus Outbreak](#)
- [Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus](#)

For Kids

Read-Aloud Stories:

- [Kindness Counts](#)
- [Giving Is Better | A Little Arrow Story!](#)
- [The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister, J. Allison James](#)
- [What Can a Citizen Do? \(best for kids who can read\)](#)
- [The Quiltmaker's Gift \(good for kids of any age\)](#)

Inspiring Stories of Kids Helping Others:

- [11-Year Old Boy Sells Lemonade to Buy Wheelchairs](#)
- [Citizen Kid by Disney: Ordinary Kids Doing Extraordinary Things](#)

Philanthropy Toolkits for Kids and Families

- [Kids Giving Kit from Community First Foundation \(includes five fun activities for kids including a Kindness Bingo sheet\)](#)
- [Learning to Give Teach One Lesson about Philanthropy](#)
- [Teen Philanthropy Café Series, by Elaine Gast Fawcett for Exponent Philanthropy](#)
- [The Hip Family Guide to Happier Holidays, by Lisa Parker](#)
- [YouthGiving.org: A Hub to Inspire, Connect, and Inform Youth Grantmaking](#)



Our Team



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Elaine lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband and three young daughters, who are adjusting to the 24/7 life at home and enjoying daily family walks. Elaine is a philanthropy advisor, communications strategist, and storyteller with 20 years serving family foundations, nonprofits, and grantmaker associations. She is the published author of 10 field-respected books for grantmakers, and hundreds of articles, tools, and guides for family philanthropists, and serves grantmaker associations, foundations, and donor families nationwide. Reach Elaine at PhilanthropyCommunications.com or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/elainegastfawcett).



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Suzanne Hammer is the founder of Hammer & Associates, a global philanthropy advisory firm based in the Denver, Colorado area. Suzanne has worked with both large and small family foundations, family offices, and enterprises for 15 years, in-person and remotely. She co-produced *Philanthropy in the Family Office: A Global Perspective*, and has produced a series of toolkits for family offices called EngagedPhilanthropy™: A Family Office Guide to Meaningful Giving, including *Laying the Groundwork; Balancing Passion and Strategy; Making the Most of Family Dynamics; and International Giving*. Reach Suzanne at SuzanneHammer.com or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/suzannehammer).

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