

The Lifehack Sessions

10 activities to kickstart your kid's life-skills



Hello and welcome to lifehacksforkids.

Our mission is to help you to teach your children the vital 'Life Skills' they are going to need to be successful in the modern world.

why?

When we realised that preparing our children to become successful adults entailed more than having good grades and a few hobbies listed on their CV, we knew we had to do something about it.

As adults we now know that becoming successful in life doesn't depend solely on your academic qualifications, however from age 5 to 21, that's the primary focus for our children. But what about all the other skills you need? What about being a great communicator? What about creativity, critical thinking, confidence, emotional intelligence, a positive attitude, money management skills?

Most of these important life skills are learned by osmosis from watching others, and predominantly us, their parents.

So after much discussion and deliberation we decided to make a conscious effort to teach our own children these vital skills. Great plan, right?

The problem we quickly realised however, was that we weren't very good at most of these life skills ourselves. (We blame the parents...). However we knew that if we could learn to teach our children these skills as an expert would, we could give our children an amazing platform upon which to build their lives, giving them a genuine edge in the future.

now more than ever

If we're serious about preparing our kids for their future, we must have some understanding of what this future is going to look like.

In just ten years time 40% of all global young graduates will come from China or India whilst just 25% will come from the US and EU (The Future of Work: Jobs

and Skills in 2030-UK Commission for Employment and Skills). Couple this with new platforms like 'Upwork' that connect businesses with potential employees from all over the world and you have a truly global employment marketplace.

What does this mean for our children? It means increased opportunity certainly. But it also means increased competition - from equally qualified candidates all over the world, who, because of where they live can do the same job for less money. What it means is that we need to give them more than a standard education.

how can parents help?

Just as we all want to send our kids to a great school to get a great academic education, we want to be able to give our kids a great life skills education too. To teach them like an expert would. Or even better – to get some experts onboard to help us do it.

Our own research into the matter told us that we are not the only ones who think these life skills are vital to success. In fact you told us that you see these life skills as at LEAST as important as standard education. And that is why we started *lifeforforkids* - an education in life for kids.

Our mission is to collaborate with experts to create tools that make it easy for you to teach your kids these necessary skills in a simple, enjoyable and effective way.

Lifeforforkids Sessions - ten fun activities to kickstart your kid's life skills.

Spending time together as a family doing 'activities' can sometimes feel like a chore - especially when those activities are supposed to be educational. The 10 activities outlined in this booklet are set to change all that.

Over the following pages you will find ten tried-and-tested activities and ideas, that will hopefully do for your child what they did for ours - namely, stimulate their creativity and imagination, encourage emotional development, kickstart a can-do attitude and help build confidence.

The ideas are suitable for ages 5-12 and each of them will teach multiple key life skills without them even realising!

The *lifeforforkids* Team.

For more ideas like these, or if you have ideas you want to share, please go to our website. <http://lifeforforkids.co.uk/the-lifeforforkids-sessions/>

a quick note about getting the most out of the activities...

Homeschooling our kids over the last two years has only served to highlight the importance of getting the most out of each learning experience.

After much research and a lot of practice we think there are five simple questions that will help to cement what your children are learning through each activity. These questions can be asked in your own conversational style in a way that your own child will engage with.

We don't ask these questions unless we think it's appropriate and we don't always ask all five, however, they're really useful as they help kids process exactly what they have learned.

- 1. what was good about that?*
this helps them to frame what they have just done in a positive way.
- 2. what did you learn?*
this helps reinforce learning by encouraging kids to process and express their thoughts for a second time.
- 3. how would you do it better next time?*
this teaches kids that things aren't set in stone and that they can change the outcome next time by doing something differently. We found that it really frees kids from fear of getting stuff wrong.
- 4. how could you use that in real life?*
this cements learning by showing how a certain activity can be translated and used in their everyday lives. It also encourages creative thinking.
- 5. how will this help you?*
attaching positive associations and feelings to what they've learned and how they can use it helps on both a conscious and subconscious level.

'maidentrip'

lifehack: attitude, inspiration, curiosity
website: [netflix.com](https://www.netflix.com) and [laura dekker](https://www.lauradekker.com)
cost: subscription dependent

For children, it's one thing seeing adults doing amazing stuff, but it's another thing entirely seeing other kids do amazing things.

The film '*Maidentrip*' tells the story of an extraordinary fourteen year old girl, Laura Dekker, who sailed solo around the world, becoming in the process, the youngest person ever to do so. The film covers her struggle with the Dutch Government to be allowed to embark upon the journey without adult supervision and shows her battle with everything from the elements, to intrusive press attention.

Our kids were mesmerised, seeing a young girl be so ambitious, accomplished and self-sufficient. We talked about it for ages - both the good and bad points in the film - then decided we all had to sign up for two classes that taught us new skills. Amongst our choices were Kung-fu, gymnastics and pottery.

'*Maidentrip*' is on Netflix, so if you don't have a subscription you can always sign up for their free trial.



steam

lifehack: skills, creative thinking, problem solving, teamwork.
website: steam.com
cost: dependent on game

Not all computer games are about killing aliens, or are sport related. There are some great family games out there that are thoughtful, intelligent, and visually stunning. We've played a few of them over the last two years and found that they foster creative thinking, logic, imagination and teamwork. We take it in turns to control the game play and shout (obviously very helpful) instructions to the poor unfortunate in charge.

There were four games that we all absolutely loved- suitable for the 5-13 age group:

1. Lilly Looking Through

Play as the eponymous character and use a special pair of goggles to rewrite the past or change the future. It's a beautifully realised world filled with magic, puzzles and marvellous machines that combine to create a sense of charm and wonder.



2. Lumino City

Play as Lumi and explore another wondrous, enchanting world - made entirely from paper, cardboard and wood - to help the heroine find her Grandad after his dramatic kidnap.



3. Detective Grimoire

Play as the clever detective in this cartoon murder-mystery to solve puzzles, collect clues, interrogate suspects and ultimately find the perpetrator.



4. Broken Age

Play as Veela a young girl who must fight to change a gory tradition and as Shay a young boy who must fight to become an adult. The game feels like an interactive story book with two connected narratives. * This is a PG game - Veela's story may be little bit off-putting for younger kids.



inside out

lifehack: emotional intelligence
website: amazon.co.uk
cost: cost of DVD

Pixar film *'Inside Out'* follows eleven year-old Riley as she moves to a new city. Within her mind's headquarters are personifications of five emotions who help her to embrace the changes the move brings. The film is a really interesting way to develop an awareness about emotions: the function and importance of each emotion (especially the 'negative' ones); conflicting emotions and how different emotions can be attached to a single memory.

We talked about it with our kids and were surprised how many questions they asked and how often they revisited the conversation. Research shows that encouraging children to reflect upon events and writing about them can help them recognise that life has it's ups and downs and emotions can change over time. A useful tool to develop for later life.

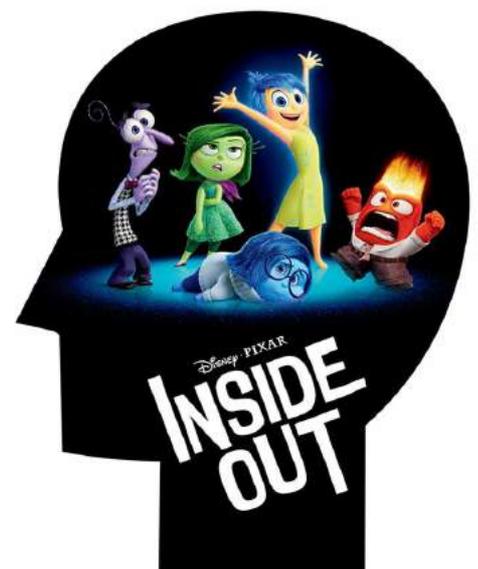
Here's an exercise we used to start developing an awareness of the role of emotions and the way they can change...

Ask your child to think of an event in their past where they felt a really strong 'negative' emotion like fear or anger. Then ask them to write or talk about:

1. *the event and how they felt about it at the time?*
2. *how they feel about it now?*
3. *how time has changed the emotion? e.g. they were nervous before speaking in assembly, but proud afterwards*
4. *whether it's possible to feel more than one emotion about the same event at the same time?*

As a fun introduction for younger kids download some colouring pages
<http://movies.disney.co.uk/inside-out/activities/>

The pbs.org website has a fantastic and really simple to use tool that will allow you to gain some insight into what is going on with your child's emotional development (as well as other areas) at various ages.



the marshmallow test

lifehack: delayed gratification
website: [TedTalks](#)
cost: preferred treat

Delayed gratification is a very important attribute to possess. Developing the ability to 'Do something your future self will thank you for.' is a critical life skill. One that's especially difficult for kids. However research tells us that children who demonstrate this ability enjoy significant advantages over those who don't, including higher academic and social performance.

The first step to developing this particular ability in our kids is to teach them about it so they become aware; enter '*The Marshmallow Experiment*'. It's a TedTalk based on a famous experiment that shows kids being offered a marshmallow by researchers. They're told that if they can wait a short time they can have two marshmallows. The researchers then leave the room and observe the child's response.



Here's how we replicated the experiment with our kids...

We kicked off proceedings by watching the TedTalk (without the kids) to prepare ourselves. Then we set up the experiment with our kids favourite treat (cookies) and hid our phones and set them to record (without telling them so as not to affect their behaviour).

When they finished the experiment we let them watch the 'TedTalk' then showed them the video of themselves. Our kids took great pleasure in watching the experiment, but seeing themselves do it amused them no end. They loved watching each other too. Allowing them to compare and contrast contextualised their own behaviour and they quickly realised that deciding to wait, or not, as the case may be, is a choice they could actively make.

Almost a year later we still have a laugh about '*The Marshmallow Experiment*'. It's certainly had a lasting impact when it comes to the kids attitude to waiting - that's not to say that they're angels, just that they understand the need to wait sometimes (and if they forget we just bring up marshmallows!).

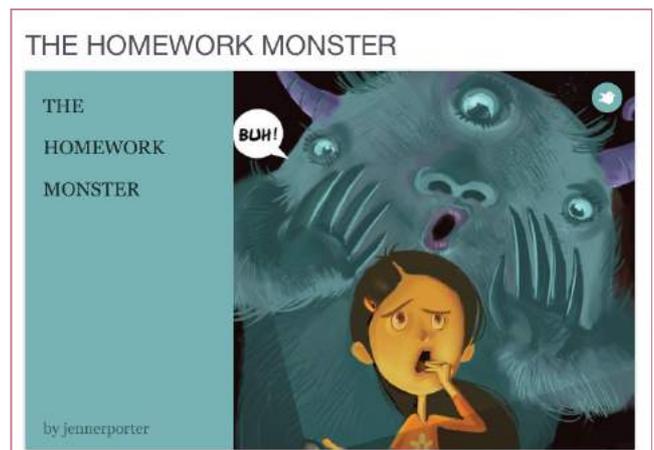
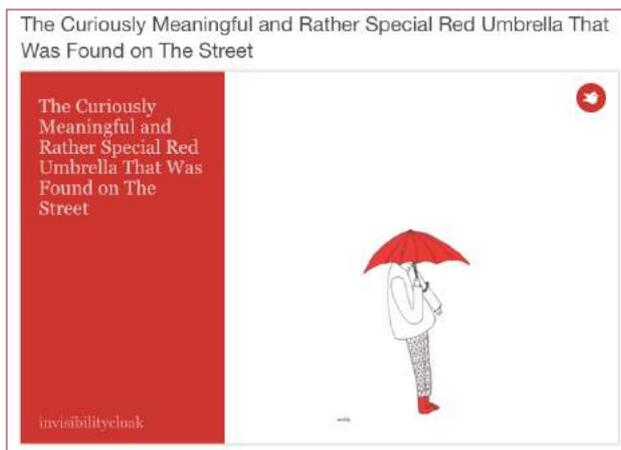
storybird

lifehack: thinking, creativity, imagination
website: storybird.com
cost: free

This is a beautiful website that helps develop your child's creativity, imagination and storytelling capabilities.

Kids can create visual stories using illustrations (commissioned from artists around the world) and couple them with collections of words designed to inspire budding young writers. It's an interesting way to start a story (using images) and in our experience, it leads to some truly great work.

Parents create a library within *Storybird* in order to control who can read your child's work. Creating a private library gives the option of inviting family and friends to keep up with the latest stories. If you choose to share publicly it's available to all other users of the site.



Create, discover, follow, share...

Storybird encourages kids to discover work written by their contemporaries (published publicly, often as part of school-wide initiatives). There are some very accomplished, inspiring stories and poems written by authors as young as 6. Your kids can give likes to stories and follow their favourite writers for instant updates.

So, you have creation and discovery, and if you wish, you can turn your child's work into physical objects by actually publishing them. Storybird offer hard-back, soft-back and picture book options that your child can use to create their stories which they will print and post for you. A great memento, or a really thoughtful gift for loved ones.

duolingo

lifehack: skill, communication, mental agility, empathy
website: [duolingo.com](https://www.duolingo.com)
cost: free

Duolingo is a great free website and app that helps you to learn another language (most Romantic and Germanic languages are covered). It has a gamified user experience so users progress through a 'tree' of skills moving from one challenge to the next and unlocking awards and achievements. A genius way to grab kids' attention.

The lessons are bite-sized chunks that focus on reading, listening and speaking. Kids start each lesson with a number of hearts that are like lives in a video game. For every mistake points and eventually hearts are lost. When all hearts are lost back to the beginning you go.

On the flipside, doing well is rewarded with lingots. Amassing a lot of lingots in quick succession is called a 'streak', again, a genius way to get kids to play for several lessons. We often hear our kids hollering at the screen when playing duolingo. Not many learning websites can lay claim to that kind of excitement.

learning a second language has loads of benefits...

Learning a second language is a great thing to do and burning those neural pathways early in life will set your children in good stead for language learning at school. A second language also enables better communication and facilitates understanding of different cultures and bilingual students have improved cognitive skills and social skills. [NYTimes 11/3/16](#) All wonderful, and very marketable skills in a global employment marketplace.



P.S. Did you know that knowing a second language can postpone the onset of Alzheimer's by 4.5 years too - so maybe you should join the kids and learn together!

give kids their own budget

lifehack: skill, confidence, independence, fiscal responsibility

website: n/a

cost: no more than you already spend

We all want to raise children that are responsible with their money. Money is such an emotional subject and our kids take their cues from us. If parents are frugal and save their children are more likely to approach money completely differently than the children of big spenders. Imagine how confusing it can be if there are parents with conflicting attitudes to money!

One of the best things we did last year was to give our children their own budget and let them manage it themselves.

This is our process (perfected through trial and error)...

We calculated the money we spent each week on the kids 'treats' e.g. sweets, hobbies and entertainment. Once we had that weekly total we then told them that they would be in charge of their own expenditure from now on.

We gave them the money for a wallet and a piggy bank, and then sat them down and explained that from now on they would have complete control over their money. They could blow it all in one day, spread it out over the week, or save it for something big. It was entirely up to them.

The key here is to let the kids do exactly what they want and learn from their behaviour. We know from personal experience that it is so tempting to tell your kids to save or to scold them for spending everything too soon - but our advice would be not to do that. They need a sense of control or the responsibility isn't there, and then the whole thing falls down. Learning from the consequences of their actions is an important part of money management and developing resilience.

Now, after aforementioned trial and error on our part, when the kids ask if they can have something, we say 'Of course! But it's coming out of your own money...'. They then have to decide if they really want it or not. Funnily enough - often they don't. All-in-all it's led to less moaning, smarter choices and a much better understanding of money (and that it doesn't grow on trees - unfortunately!).

choremonster

lifehack: responsibility, humility, empathy, resilience,
website: choremonster.com
cost: free

Research shows that giving kids household chores from an early age helps to 'build a lasting sense of mastery, responsibility and self-reliance'*. It goes without saying that it makes our lives easier too.

Choremonster is a task-management app that gamifies chores. Parents create chores e.g. make your bed, then add cute images and give point values; they then add notes to let kids know why it's important; inform them who's given them the chore and finally assign them to their kids.

Kids access Choremonster through a phone or website to let parents know they've completed the chore. Once approved they receive points towards a reward everybody's agreed on. Our kids have included everything from pizza nights to rollerskates and video games.

Choremonster encourages the kids to take responsibility around the house and makes it fun for them to help you out.

** Research by Marty Rosman, professor emeritus, University of Minnesota. Quote from Wall Street Journal March 2015.*



the artful parent

lifehack: creativity, neural development, problem solving
website: artfulparent.com and keepy.me
cost: free

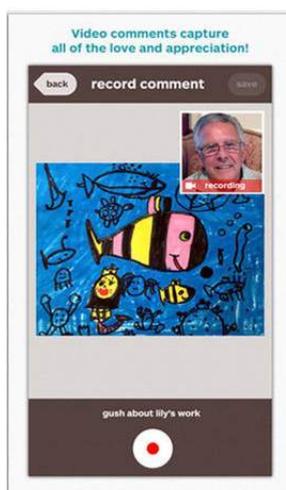
Art has different meanings to different people. To adults it's a form of expression, to families it's often a way to do something cool together. To kids it's a way to explore their creativity and help them make sense of the world in a safe way.

Art has also been shown to develop children's mental, social and emotional skills. Creating art can also boost their ability to analyse and problem-solve and it gives them the freedom to experiment, to make mistakes and nurture new ways of thinking. All skills that are valuable in other walks of life.

We love getting arty with the kids but sometimes it can be difficult to come up with ideas for things to do. Writer and artist Jean Van't Hul created the website *The Artful Parent* which is packed with ideas and activities to do with kids from toddlers to teens. Some of our favourites have been the stained-glass activity, the DIY magic scratch paper and the brilliant combination man game. She also has great tips about creating your own materials and tutorials for older kids for drawing faces, bodies etc.

If you run out of wall space for all your kids' artwork and you feel guilty throwing it away there's a brilliant app called Keepy that allows you to photograph, upload and share your children's work with friends and family.

Their work is stored in an ordered timeline and you can add video and voice narration to your uploads. Family and friends can add their comments and likes as well. A simple and easy way to digitally store your children's artistic endeavours to look back on in years to come. <http://www.keepy.me/>



kiva

lifehack: emotional intelligence, empathy, entrepreneurial mindset
website: kiva.org
cost: c. £15 or \$25

This is a really lovely way to spend some time with your kids and it teaches them a lot about life. Kids know that there are plenty of people in the world who perhaps aren't as fortunate as they are and Kiva is a nice way of allowing kids to recognise this and to actually do something positive to help.

It's also a great lesson in entrepreneurship, determination and resilience, seeing people who are in a difficult situation and who are being positive and proactive in looking for a solution is very inspirational.

You can lend by gender, location or age. You can help fund start ups, youth business projects or help to kick start a local economy that has been ravaged by war or a natural disaster.

As the people you support succeed and repay their loans you will receive updates. You'll see your money return to your Kiva account, which you can then use to help someone else out, donate to Kiva, or withdraw - it's up to you.



thank you.

You made it to the end!

If you found this booklet useful please feel free to share it. If you and your family test out any of the activities above we would love to hear from you.

Why not tweet us your favourite from the list, or tag a friend on Facebook with the number of the activity you think their family would most enjoy?

Likewise, if you have any great ideas that you would like to share or you want more content like this please visit www.lifeforforkids.co.uk or find us on Twitter or Facebook.

Our goal here at lifeforforkids is to provide parents with the tools they need to prepare their children for success as adults.