

THE GREAT INDOORS

These days we're all spending far more time within our own four walls than we're used to and, while that generally gets a bad press, it also offers plenty of positives. Here are 12 ideas for making the most of this time

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Staying indoors has earned a bad name over the years. But now, as we adjust to the new reality of self-isolation, it's time to make the best of it. There are myriad activities we can indulge in during this period to stimulate our bodies, fire up our minds and improve our wellbeing, so don't see this as time wasted, see it as a precious opportunity instead. Here are 12 activities to help us all come through this as better, happier and more contented people...

1 LEARN A NEW SKILL

As we're all aware, it's good for us to keep learning. The trouble, usually, is finding the time to do it – and that may be easier for a while. With online resources such as YouTube, free tutorials are but a click away, meaning there are thousands of fresh skills at your fingertips. Fancy giving new life to that weathered old footstool? Simply search one of YouTube's upholstery tutorials. Want to learn a new language or find out how to knock up a garden table? Treat the internet as your own online university.

2 CATCH UP ON BOX SETS

There's no better time to catch up on some of those talking-point TV shows you might have missed. The BBC's iPlayer, Channel Four's All4 and ITV Hub offer up a vast library of recent, small-screen must-sees, including the

BAFTA-winning *Killing Eve*, crime drama *Broadchurch* and Agatha Christie's classic *The Pale Horse*. If you haven't already tried them, now's the time to consider the streaming platforms Netflix, Amazon Prime and NOW TV, as well as Britbox, a new £5.99-a-month service offering up thousands of homegrown classics, including *Porridge*, *Doctor Who*, *Brideshead Revisited* and vintage episodes of *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*. Couch-potato heaven.

3 BLITZ YOUR ODD JOBS

It's almost too easy to walk past a skirting board that needs repainting or a door handle that needs tightening, saying to yourself, "Ah, I'll do it tomorrow/next week/next month/next year." Well, right now, today *is* tomorrow, so keep yourself busy sorting out those small, niggling jobs around the home. »





4 GET CREATIVE

Seasoned crafters talk of something called 'the crafter's high', a meditative mode that we drift into when we're truly immersed. Not only is engaging your creative side a great way of passing the time but you'll also have something physical to show for it at the end. That's a deeply satisfying feeling, so what about crafting your own greetings cards to send to friends and neighbours, designing a family scrapbook or maybe beginning an ambitious autumn-ready knitting project?

5 TACKLE 'THE PILE'

A 2017 survey of 2,000 people found that 67% of adults would like to read more but nearly half (48%) admitted they were too busy. This, then, is the ideal opportunity to finally pick up that copy of *War and Peace* that's been sitting untouched on your shelf for too many years. Or maybe you want to embark on a marathon read of all the James Bond books? Or revisit that copy of *Northanger Abbey*? If you're a bookworm, head to the Boundless Reading Room Group on

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Facebook. You'll find plenty of handy literary tips on there and you can post about the novel you currently have your head buried in. As Walt Disney once said, "There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island."

[facebook.com/groups/boundlessreadingroom](https://www.facebook.com/groups/boundlessreadingroom)

6 RE/CONNECT WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Luckily, in this age of Skype, FaceTime and Zoom, our friends and family are but a click away on our phones or tablets. Some of them may be feeling lonely and worried during this time, so keep

in touch and make sure they're OK. It doesn't have to be via video calling either – a good old-fashioned phone call (remember those?) or even a handwritten letter would be cherished.

7 MAKE PLANS FOR FUTURE TRAVEL

Just because we've had to cancel our immediate holidays, it doesn't mean we'll never be able to go away again. Take this staycation time to *really* research your next trip, be it in the UK or further afield. Giving ourselves something to look forward to when all this drama is over is essential in keeping our spirits up.

8 DISCOVER PODCASTS

There's a podcast out there for everyone, from the age of nine to 90. Start by scouring the Browse section of iTunes or the Trending Podcasts section of Google Podcasts. Or you could begin with the BBC's *Desert Island Discs* archive, which has almost the entire history of Radio 4's iconic music and chat show available to download, and *TED Talks*, a series of short, informative but thoroughly accessible lectures on anything from science to history to popular culture.

9 GET ACTIVE

You don't need to go to the gym to keep fit. In fact, there is everything you need to keep your body limber and heart healthy in your home. Yoga and Pilates are both muscle-strengthening activities that you can do without leaving the house, and there are plenty of exercise videos on YouTube to help you coordinate your workouts. If you're keen on something a little more challenging, then why not try some high-intensity interval training (HIIT), which is proven to be good for

all age groups? HIIT aids the growth of new muscle, helping to counteract much of the muscle loss that comes with ageing. There are low-impact versions but if you have any doubt about its suitability for you then seek medical advice before donning your trainers.

10 GET KONDO-ING AND HINCH-ING

Kondo-ing, if you've never heard the word, simply means the process of decluttering your life and surrounding yourself only by items that spark joy in you. It's inspired by the Netflix series *Tidying Up With Marie Kondo*, which has made Ms Kondo a lifestyle guru. Equally inspirational is social media influencer Mrs Hinch, aka Sophie Hinchcliffe. Credited with changing the way we see our household chores, she has managed to elevate the act of cleaning to a whole new level with her motivating Instagram posts and books. So, consider giving your house a thorough sorting out before embarking on a refreshing and satisfying deep clean.

11 TRY ONLINE GAMES

Chess, Scrabble, sudoku, bridge, bingo... there's an incredible range of games available online to help us keep our brains buzzing. There are games we can play on our own and games we can play with other people five, 500 and 5,000 miles away from us, meaning we can enjoy the social aspect of a communal game without ever leaving our homes.

12 VENTURE OUT INTO THE GARDEN

OK, this one isn't indoors – but while we're being told to stay inside, thankfully that doesn't exclude unwinding in our own gardens. Summer is nearly with us, so it's a perfect time to get out and ready the garden for the coming months. You might also fancy creating a herb patch, or a butterfly- or bee-friendly area. You could begin a daily birdwatch, looking out for those nesters, or use your outdoor space to take 10 minutes for some daily self-healing meditation or indulge your newfound love of yoga, Pilates or tai chi. All we need now are some blue skies... ■