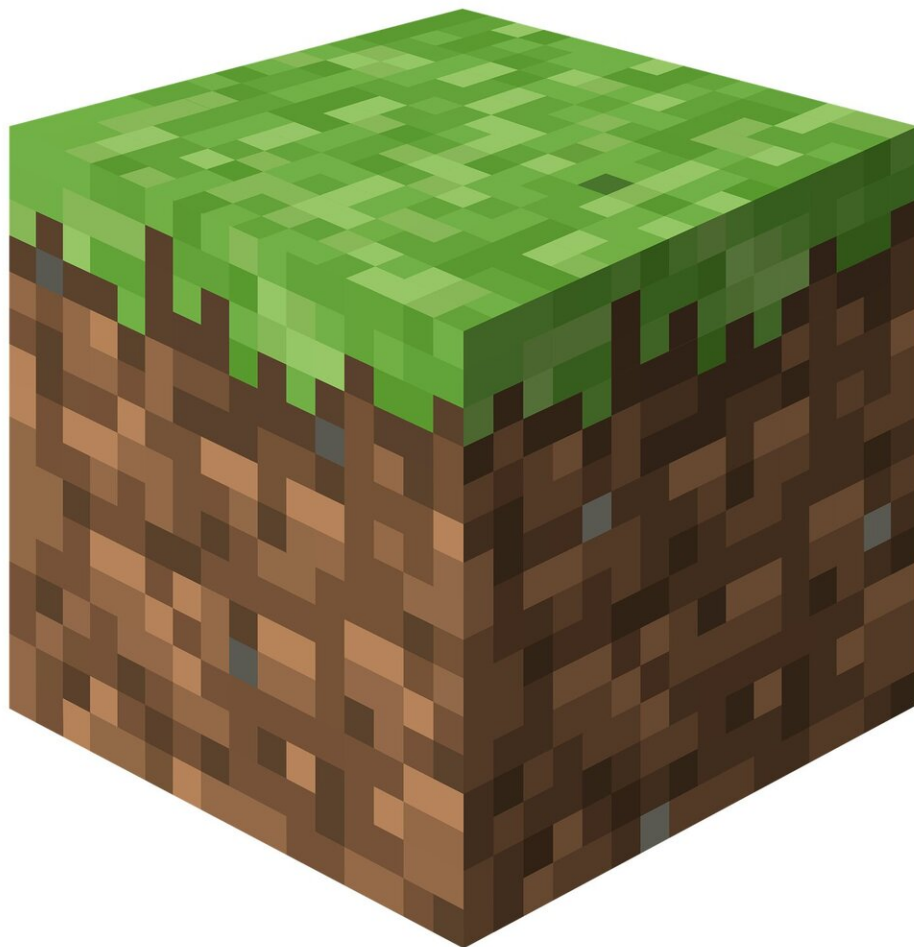


Coronavirus home lesson plans coming for free in 'Minecraft'

March 25 2020, by Mike Snider



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Microsoft wants to help students keep flexing their mental muscles even if they aren't in the classroom, with many schools closed during the coronavirus crisis.

So kids and parents can explore some free "Minecraft" challenges, made available for free today through June 30 in the Minecraft Marketplace, found within the game played by more than 90 million each month.

The special activities, already used by teachers, let users visit the International Space Station, tour landmarks in the Nation's Capital, learn to code with a robot, explore [marine biology](#) and explore 3-D fractals.

Released in 2009 as a building game, "Minecraft" became an [educational tool](#), too, after the software giant acquired the game's developer Mojang for \$2.5 billion in 2014. Now, more than 35 million students and teachers are using "Minecraft: Education Edition" in 115 countries.

Earlier this month, Microsoft made "Minecraft: Education Edition" available free to teachers who have an Office 365 Education account. Now any "Minecraft" user can find these specially-curated dozen activities in a new educational category within the marketplace and download them for free. Usually, players visit the marketplace to buy new adventures created by other creators.

"Obviously, in the way that schooling is happening now we thought it was incredibly important that we try bring that education experience as much as we can into the home where parents are trying to work through work-from-home and school-from-home scenarios to help them out," said Phil Spencer, Microsoft's head of Xbox.

The content can be found on "Minecraft" played across any number of

devices including Android & iOS devices, Kindle Fire, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, Windows 10 PCs, Gear VR, Oculus Rift, Fire TV, and Windows Mixed Reality headsets. (If you're in need of a device, Reviewed found that Best Buy is offering the XBox One online for \$249.)

Among the free educational exercises available on "Minecraft":

- International Space Station: Created with NASA, this lets you plan experiments on the space station.
- Marine Biology Role Play: Explore the role of a marine biologist in a submarine.
- Washington D.C.: Tour 17 national landmarks including the White House and the Lincoln Memorial, White House, Washington Monument, Pentagon, and 13 other realistic national landmarks. Find your way in survival or creative mode, or do the story-based quest and take a quiz to prove your know D.C.
- Bees!: Learn about bees, become a beekeeper and explore a bee-based town.
- Mt. Olympus: Learn about Greek myths in this multiplayer environment.
- Fun with Fractals: Build 3-D fractals in a mathematically-created world.

"It's amazing in 'Minecraft' to watch what people do," Spencer told U.S. TODAY. "You can learn all kinds of things. It's not just math. It's not science or history. You find these curriculum packs are really comprehensive in the things they are able to bring into the home."

Spencer announced the availability of the free "Minecraft" content on the Xbox blog Tuesday.

"With hundreds of millions of kids at home due to coronavirus-related

school closures more kids are going online to spend time with their friends, explore online worlds and learn through play," he said in the post. "Families are trying to navigate the need to help their children with distance learning and balance that with taking time to have fun."

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