



Family Activities Around Ithaca



The Ithaca area has many organizations, programs, groups, and locations designed for young families and their children. Here are just some of the options, in alphabetical order. Indoor spaces can be great on a rainy day, cold day, super-hot day, or just anytime you need to get out of the house!

With the pandemic, many places have shut down, now have reduced hours or revised their services. Many places hope to or plan to reopen again late spring or summer therefore we have kept them on the list as you plan out activities for your family in the near future. Please call or check their websites for the most current information.

Last updated: 4/2/2021

This listing is constantly changing and will be updated quarterly. If you know of fun location or activities for young families or would like to be included on this list, feel free to contact us and we'll update and help spread the word. worklife@cornell.edu

Atlas Bowl:

Located on Main Street in Trumansburg, NY, they offer family discounts every Tuesday and have private party options. Celebrators can come during normal business hours or schedule something during the day for a closed event. 607-387-3191 or at email atlas@atlasbowl.com.

Brooktondale Community Center:

Free to community groups for play. You can sign up to be an opener/closer and use the calendar and key available at the Brookton Market. A great place for preschool playgroups, as it's often open in day and has an outdoor structure, pavilion, and some push/ride-on toys. Limited services currently. 607-539-6537

Cass Park:

Cass Park, rink, and pool are programs of the Ithaca Youth Bureau which provide valuable health and recreation activities for residents of Ithaca and Tompkins County year-round. They have 32 athletic fields, 2 playgrounds, 4 tennis courts, and fitness trails. [Ice Skating](#) (Oct-March), [Swimming](#) (June-October) 607-273-1090

Cayuga Nature Center:

Part indoors, part outdoors, the Cayuga Nature Center has lots of nature-themed activities, some fun animals, a butterfly house, and Treetops, a 6-story treehouse. Some areas are open now and others will open soon. 607-273-6260

Circus Culture:

Circus Classes, camps, performances, parties, free play, and more for kids. Aerial fabric, trapeze, juggling, tightwire, acrobatics, hooping, props, and more! There is a downloadable coloring book on their website. Closed currently.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology:

Not so much a "play space," but the Lab of Ornithology has a visitor's center with large windows for bird watching, interactive exhibits with video and sounds, and an outdoor walking trail around Sapsucker Woods. Inside is currently closed but the trails are open. 607-254-2473

Discovery Trail:

The Discovery Trail is made up of the following organizations which provide excellent indoor and outdoor opportunities. There is more info on these locations by clicking the Discovery Trail link. Cayuga Nature Center, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Cornell Plantations, The History Center, Johnson Museum of Art, Museum of the Earth, Sciencenter, and Tompkins County Public Library. 607-279-2501

Facebook:

Contains many Ithaca-based pages. Those especially helpful for moms include [Ithaca Mama](#), [Ithaca Mamas](#), [Mama's Comfort Camp](#) and for all parents, [Ithaca Families Gift Economy](#), and of course the [Ithaca Family Fun and the Living Gorges Blog](#).

GIAC:

The Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) is a center for all ages, particularly youth and teens. A wide range of programs is offered during the afterschool hours of 2:00 to 6:00 p.m., Monday-Friday. The program is very fast-paced and exciting. In the summer, they offer day camps. 607-272-3622

Head over Heels Gymnastics:

Fun gymnastics classes for 1 and up, as well as camps during times when school is out and Unstructured Playtime fall through spring. Unstructured Playtime is an open gym time for parents and kids to play together and get out some energy during those cold months. Check the Head Over Heels website for current schedules. 607-273-5187

The History Center in Tompkins County:

The History Center offers unique exhibitions, experiences, and educational programs throughout the year. Admission is free. You can learn about how our community grew from early Native American settlements, through the establishment of Cornell

University and Ithaca College, to the building of the Downtown Commons and more. Open with limited capacity now. 607-273-8284

Jillian's Drawers:

Jillian's Drawers is a natural parenting store with a community room. Several playgroups (music and Zumbini) and parent support groups meet in the community room, including a dads/father's group (ithacadadsgroup@gmail.com) and parents of twins group. Classes are currently on hold. 607-272-1237

Lansing Drop-In Center:

This drop-off "playcare" has 3 paid staff and a parent volunteer each week. They are open MWF 9:30 am-12:15 pm during the school year, following the school calendar. You pay \$2-\$5 depending on what you can afford. They have circle time, on Wednesdays a music teacher comes in, and they provide a snack. They also do crafts, playdoh, etc. Currently closed. 607-533-7658

Mama Goose:

This store not only has some great deals on gently used kids' stuff, it's also a nice place to hang out and play on a cold or rainy day. They are in a new location, 609 West Clinton St. 607-216-7851

The Metal Smithery

The only metal arts school in the region. Classes for youth, private parties, and private lessons are available.

Museum of the Earth:

This museum has exhibits on rocks, fossils, dinosaurs, and much more. There's a great mastodon skeleton and provides an opportunity for scientists, science enthusiasts, families, and their children to learn about the earth in a fun and engaging way. 607-273-6623

Niki's Party Place:

Bounce Place in the mall, Niki's has 4 large bouncy structures, including 1 that is tame enough for babies who can crawl well. They also have a toddler play area. Parents can go into the bounce structures with their children as long as they don't bounce. Especially on weekends, call in advance to make sure they are not closed for a private birthday party. 607-330-7979

Sciencenter:

Possibly the Ithaca area's finest indoor activity, the Sciencenter is full of hands-on fun for children of all ages. There's a triceratops skull, toy ducks in moving water, toy trains, a touch tank, an animal room, and tons of other interactive exhibits. 607-272-0600

Shipwreck Mini Golf:

In Cortland, this is the nation's largest indoor mini-golf course, illuminated with black lights. They also have a large outdoor mini-golf course and bounce houses. 607-758-8585

MOPS:

Ithaca -MOPS stands for Mothers of Preschoolers and is an international Christian-based support group that exists to encourage, equip, and help women become the best moms that they can be. Women who are pregnant or have young children (birth through kindergarten) are all invited to join MOPS. 607-277-3333

Candor MOPS: Summer playdates Thursdays from 10-noon at the Candor Elementary School playground on Academy Street in Candor. We'll meet at the Candor Congregational Church at 134 Main Street, Candor. Those wishing for more information can contact Merrybearie@frontier.com or 659-5191

Dryden MOPS: Dryden MOPS meet at the Methodist Church in Dryden the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month from 9-11.

Northern Light Learning Center:

A cooperative homeschool learning center located in downtown Ithaca is accepting member families with children five and older. We're a group of about 60 homeschooling families that work together to offer a regular schedule of classes and events for all ages of children, along with social clubs, gatherings, and community events. Past classes have included everything from Beginning Spanish to Mandarin Chinese, Social Justice Films to Plant and Animal Biology, Anime Club to Algebra, and that's just a sampling.

Primitive Pursuits:

Primitive Pursuits has outdoor recreation programs for kids of various ages, including their new Forest Preschool, free outdoor preschool playgroup at 4-H acres and camps. Primitive Pursuits is a non-profit 4-H program in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. 607-272-2292

Shops at Ithaca Mall:

Home to play places like the SPCA and Niki's Party Place bounce houses, the mall is a nice place to spend a few hours on a cold or rainy day. There are several seasonal attractions like tractors, Halloween stores, Santa, the Easter Bunny, and a toy store around Christmas time. A bonus is a ride on cars and an arcade near the food court. 607-257-5337

SPCA:

Annex in the Mall - This place is a great spot to play with a kitty or two. The workers are friendly and welcome children to grab a cat toy and dangle it for the cats to bat at. They sometimes have a Story time, though the program is dependent on a volunteer organizer. Currently open by appointment for serious adopters. 607-257-1822

Sunny Days:

A gift shop / art gallery / performance space that has a chalk wall that kids can draw on and a basket of musical instruments. Not much, but it's something for parents looking to do some shopping while with their kids on the Commons! 607-319-5260

Tompkins County Public Library:

Located in downtown Ithaca, the Library has a large children's area, regular storytimes, and many programs. They host a tween book club for kids ages 8-12 throughout the year, virtual baby storytime, coding club, science trivia, and more. The programming takes short breaks throughout the year, so check the calendar or their link for storytimes. In the summer, the library also hosts storytime at the downtown Farmer's Market. 607-272-4557

Ithaca Youth Bureau

The Ithaca Youth Bureau Recreation Department offers year-round recreational programming for youth and families. The Recreation Partnership is a collaboration of 10 municipalities in Tompkins County and supports many of the programs and keeps fees affordable for all. You can register for programs online through the Community Pass and browse the online catalog (searchable by keyword, program groups, age, date, or location). 607-273-8364

YMCA:

The YMCA has daycare rooms, pools, a playground, equipment, and a gym. Aside from membership options (which provide tons of great classes, discounted lessons, etc), day passes are available and fun activities are often open to non-members as well. 607-257-0101

Visit Ithaca

This is the primary website for information on tourism for Tompkins County and Ithaca. Head outdoors and explore the beautiful and expansive New York State Parks any day of the week. Here is the website for updates on the [hiking trails](#). Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau, 607-272-1313
