

Children's notebook Extracurricular engagements, by Daisy Bridgewater

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Left and above myKidsy activities include computer-coding clubs and exploring natural history. Below the site's founder, Yasmine Mahmoudieh, and her children



If, as we enter a new year, you find yourself questioning your children's extracurricular activities, asking yourself whether football is the route to enlightenment and Minecraft the key to technological advancement, a new website, myKidsy, is here to help. Launched in London in November last year by Yasmine Mahmoudieh, its mission is to simplify the process of finding and booking after-school, weekend and holiday activities.

Moving to London from Berlin with her two young children four years ago, Mahmoudieh found it difficult to organise their lives, particularly when her work as an architect was still taking her around the globe. She wanted to enrol her daughter in a yoga class, something she feels every child would benefit from, but found information hard to come by. Then her son wanted to learn tennis. And fencing. 'We all lead such busy lives, and with mothers increasingly working it can be impossible to find what we are looking for to engage our children,' she explains. Longing to spend more time with her children, she decided to launch myKidsy with the aim of simplifying and enhancing family life, for her own family and those around her.

Known in the architectural world for work that is creative and functional, Mahmoudieh

applied the same principles to the design of her site, commissioning Javier Mariscal (the designer of the Barcelona Olympics' mascot) to create a logo and investing heavily to make the site easy to use. Activities are divided into three categories – after-school, weekend and holiday – and then by type, for example arts and crafts, martial arts, science and technology, or dance and drama. Each provider is researched and listed free of charge, and if Mahmoudieh notices any gaps, she will fill them herself, partnering with organisations to offer new activities. 'My vision is to deliver the most rewarding, novel activities that will prepare children for the future,' she says, highlighting a free computer-coding class for seven- to 12-year-olds run by experts from CoderDojo (a global collaboration dedicated to teaching coding to young people). 'Coding is the literacy of the future,' she tells me. 'Children need to be encouraged to be producers, not just consumers, of technology.'

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Next will be classes on entrepreneurship, self-reflection, meditation and spirituality. 'Technology has changed the way that we engage with the world, but we still have to have silence and reflection,' she says. Mahmoudieh's plans do not stop at providing services for the children of London's time-poor elite. She intends to roll the listings service out regionally and globally (she has just launched successfully in Paris) and is recruiting a team of visionary directors and collaborators, including David Taylor, an author of *The Business of Being Social*. Eventually bookings will be taken through the site, generating income for the directors, but for now Mahmoudieh is working passionately to build up a viable online community, with daily blog posts on educational activities and events, a parents' forum, and Kidsy Corner, where children are encouraged to post their own work and comments. Next will be a service directory, where parents will be able to find tutors or babysitters, all recommended and endorsed by fellow myKidsy users, and later an e-commerce branch, enabling parents to buy the required kit for a specific activity. 'I want myKidsy to be a one-stop shop for parents, and a place to inspire the next generation.'

mykidsy.com

