

Learning from home – Hints and tips for families

This resource contains practical hints and tips for families with children who are learning at home during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We recognise that parents cannot be expected to become teachers and you and your child are both adapting to the new circumstances. It is important to keep things into perspective and do the best you can together. During this time, the priority for learning is to keep minds active and happy so that children are ready to learn again when they return to school.

Prepare for learning



1. Find out how and where teachers are uploading lessons, resources and activities. If you're not sure, contact the school.
2. Print resources if you have access to a printer. If not, upload them onto the computer. This will mean that activities are not always done over the Internet where there are lots of other distractions.
3. Set up a 'learning area' at a desk or a table with pens, paper and exercise books. Try to avoid learners sitting on sofas, armchairs or isolated in their bedrooms as this should help put a barrier between time for learning and time for relaxing.

Structure the day



4. Encourage learners to start the learning day as if they were getting ready to go to school, for example: getting up, getting dressed, eating breakfast and being ready to learn at a consistent time each morning. This will help learners to keep in this rhythm for when they return to school.
5. Start the learning day early (8 to 9am) and have consistent start and finish times.
6. Structure the day around time-limited blocks of learning, breaks, other activities and a clear finish time when recreation or play time begins.
7. Mix learning up, for example: do some writing, some reading, some online activities, some talking, some drawing, some making. Avoid doing one thing for too long.
8. Don't make the learning day last longer than it needs to be. If everything is done well in a few hours, it is fine to stop, unless there is a school timetable to follow.

Balance the day



9. Primary
 - A. Write a list at the start of each day of the learning activities that will be completed during that day. This should be based on the lessons and learning resources provided by teachers.
 - B. Support learners to complete exercises and resources focused on literacy and numeracy at the start of the day.
 - C. Finish the learning day by reflecting on learning, achievements and plans for the next day.
10. Secondary
 - A. Support the learner to write a weekly timetable that they can stick to. As far as possible, this should follow the school timetable.
 - B. Encourage learners to write a list at the start of each day on what activities and resources they will do and use that day. This should be based on the lessons and learning resources provided by their teachers.
 - C. Encourage learners to keep a 'personal learning plan' to track their progress, note questions for their teachers, and write down their achievements. Finish the learning day by reflecting on the personal learning plan entries for the day.

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Incorporate physical activity



11. Ensure that every day includes some form of physical activity and exercise. This could include outdoor sports if you have a garden, following an exercise video for young people, and/or going out for walks consistent with the Government's advice.
12. If you cannot access outdoor spaces, bring the outside in: grow a plant, make a 'den', learn a craft, use natural materials in learning, care for an animal etc.

Incorporate creativity



13. Support learners to do something more creative in the afternoons. This could include drawing, creative writing, crafts, cooking, music, etc. Creative activities are great for developing skills and are important aspects in the learning day.
14. Make use of the many cultural and creative resources provided by cultural organisations such as museums, art galleries, libraries, theatres and music venues. These include things for learners to learn, do and experience.

Separate learning and recreation time



15. Follow the same rules on screens, phones and tablets as learners would at school. Do not allow screen time in breaks or lunch and recreational use of devices should be saved until after the learning day.
16. Have a clear finish time when the learning day ends and learners can relax, pick up their phones, speak to their friends, watch TV, etc.
17. Change the routine at weekends so that there are clear boundaries between learning days (Monday to Friday) and weekend time. Provide a break over the holidays.

Use motivation



18. Establish some simple rewards which can be easily withdrawn if your learner is not motivated and is unwilling to do any learning that day. If you do decide on a set of rewards, it is important to keep them simple, small scale and deliverable.
19. Don't underestimate regular small words of encouragement.

Maintain good health and wellbeing



20. It can be very tempting to snack throughout the day when you're at home but ensure learners limit snacking to designated break times and ensure snacks are part of a healthy, balanced diet.
21. This is a strange time for everyone, so allow time and space for people to share their concerns. Ask children what they have heard about the outbreak and support them. Be as truthful as possible but engage in a way that is appropriate for your child.
22. Avoid study overload. Be kind to yourself and your children. As much as you're trying to implement a schedule, it doesn't need to be set in stone. If you miss a session, don't panic or beat yourself up about it, simply start again on your next scheduled session.
23. Maintain your support network. Have someone on hand to offer encouragement when you or your child need a boost.

Use help and support



24. Your school will be on hand to provide virtual help and support.
25. The Department for Education has [advice and resources](#) for parents.
26. There are many helpful and free online resources so if you find some good ones, share these links and resources with your friends and networks.

...and finally, please stay safe and keep well during this difficult time.