

SUPPORTING LEARNING FROM HOME

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS



Helping children transition to online learning is critical for their success now and in the future. The good news is that there are tried-and-true strategies that can make online and hybrid learning effective. This guide contains tips and tools to help you feel confident in supporting learning from home.

Parents and caregivers can help learners and ensure a successful year by:

- Providing an effective learning environment.
- Creating a meaningful learning plan.
- Becoming a supportive learning coach.

The suggestions in this guide can help make learning from home successful, but you know your child best, so be sure to adapt these strategies to their needs.

Provide an Effective Learning Environment

In face-to-face learning, going to a school building helps children transition into learning mode. The school environment provides a physical reminder of the behaviors and norms that are important for effective learning. This might include participating in activities, staying focused on work and completing tasks.

When learning online, it's important to create an environment that helps students transition from "home mode" to "school mode." Having a designated learning station in your home, even if it's just a corner of their room, helps them make the transition as they grow to associate the space with the creativity and discovery that comes along with effective online learning.

CREATE A LEARNING STATION

A learning station is a consistent space where school work takes place, such as a desk in a bedroom. If space in a bedroom isn't available or being in their room makes it too hard to transition to school mode, you can create learning stations in other parts of the house. A lap desk, for example, can turn a couch or a chair into a learning station. With younger kids, you might be more creative – such as building a learning fort under the dining room table.

Wherever you create their learning station, it's important to find a place that is:

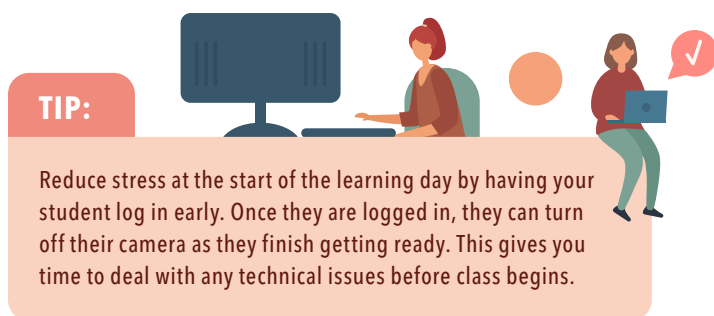
- Comfortable
- Consistently available every school day
- Relatively free of distractions

Dealing With Shared Spaces

With other siblings learning from home, or parents working from home, a child's learning station may have to be in a shared space (e.g. multiple children working at a dining room table). If this is the case, there are some important adjustments you should consider to make learning stations work well. For example, a headset with a microphone can make it easier to block out noise while students are participating online, and a trifold display (like the kind used for science fair projects) can turn a shared table into a more focused learning space.

TIP:

Both [Apple](#) and [Android](#) devices allow you to set up parental controls, including turning off access to certain apps during the school day.



TIP:

Reduce stress at the start of the learning day by having your student log in early. Once they are logged in, they can turn off their camera as they finish getting ready. This gives you time to deal with any technical issues before class begins.

GET THE TECH RIGHT

Whether it's school-issued or a parent or child's device, having the tech ready and using it effectively will go a long way toward ensuring a successful online learning experience. Here are some recommendations:

- If you're sharing a device with your child, check your settings and be sure that the various apps you've installed are appropriate for children.
- Make a list of all the websites your student will be using for school with their login information. Have it available for easy reference so you don't have to scramble when class is starting.
- Having your student turn their camera on during videoconferences with their class can help increase engagement with peers and help teachers pull students into lessons and related discussions.
- When experiencing technical problems, stay calm. Modeling how to troubleshoot tech issues is an important skill for students and their future learning.

Create a Meaningful Learning Plan

After you've established an effective learning environment with your student, it's important for them to understand what their learning journey will look like. It's helpful to create an easy-to-read schedule so your children know what to expect based on what you've received from the school and your family routines. This is particularly important for schools that have hybrid schedules or A/B days where the schedule changes each day.

If you have children with different schedules, creating an easily accessible schedule will be helpful for adults in the family as well. It's also important to involve children in the process. Create a schedule that's realistic for your family, and be sure to include some unstructured time.

MAP OUT A SCHEDULE

Here's an example to get started:

Monday		Tuesday	
7 a.m.	Get ready/ Breakfast	7 a.m.	Get ready/ Breakfast
8 a.m.	Math	8 a.m.	Social Studies
9 a.m.	Break	9 a.m.	Break
10 a.m.	English	10 a.m.	Music
11 a.m.	Lunch	11 a.m.	Lunch
12 p.m.	Reading time	12 p.m.	Reading time
1 p.m.	Physical activity	1 p.m.	Physical activity
2 p.m.	Art	2 p.m.	Science
3 p.m.	Outdoor/Social time	3 p.m.	Outdoor/Social time
6 p.m.	Dinner	6 p.m.	Dinner
7 p.m.	Free time/ Chores	7 p.m.	Free time/ Chores
8 p.m.	Get ready for bed	8 p.m.	Get ready for bed

KEEPING BALANCE

When school and social time are both happening online, focusing on screen time may not be the best way to teach boundaries. The book *Digital for Good: Raising Kids to Thrive in an Online World* suggests a better approach is to teach digital balance. Instead of focusing on how many minutes a child spends on the screen, help them create a healthy balance among a variety of online and offline activities.

Here are some tips:

- Discuss the importance of having a variety of digital and physical activities with your kids.
- Incorporate non-digital learning activities into the school day.
- Agree on tech-free times, such as family meals (parents: this includes you, too).
- Avoid leaving devices in kids' bedrooms at night; store out of reach at the end of the learning day.

Take Breaks

Plan breaks for kids throughout the day or use breaks the school sets between classes or activities. Brainstorm with your child a list of activities that they can do during those breaks, such as:

- Working on a puzzle
- Drawing or coloring
- Getting a snack

Get Outside

When weather permits, make sure children get outside each day. This is an opportunity to change their setting and get some physical activity.

You and your child may want to generate a list of activities that they can choose from when they have outside time. Consider activities like:

- Taking a walk
- Going on a bike ride
- Playing an outdoor game

TIP:

There are a number of activities on YouTube that are great for helping with physical activity when you can't go outside (e.g. *Cosmic Kids Yoga*).

TIP:

Have kids start their day as if they were going to school. For example, get up, have breakfast, get dressed, do any morning chores and fill a water bottle. This preparation will help them feel like it's more of a regular school day.

Make Time for Friends

Social interaction is important for kids to learn skills like conflict management and emotional regulation. Look for ways kids can interact and build relationships. Here are some examples:

- **Study groups:** Encourage kids to set up digital study groups or meet in person with a small team of friends for a shared lesson or to study.
- **Multiplayer online games:** With appropriate supervision, games like Minecraft can be played in real time with other players and can provide a safe way to interact with peers.
- **Video chat:** Apps that let you send video messages can feel more like a conversation than texting and can help younger kids who may struggle to type stay in touch with friends.

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Online and hybrid learning can be stressful. No matter how well you plan, there will be moments of frustration. It's OK to let your child walk away for a minute if they're becoming upset with a learning experience. If there are ongoing frustrations, talk to your child's teacher or school counselor for suggestions.



Become a Supportive Learning Coach

While children have to transition from “home mode” to “school mode” when participating in online learning, parents and caregivers also need to transition from “parent” to “learning coach.” This means helping your child develop good habits and helping to remove any barriers to effective learning. It also means taking a positive approach and working through problems constructively. It *doesn't* mean solving all their problems or doing their work for them.

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD BE SUCCESSFUL

Much of the school experience for your children will be shaped by your example and attitude. If children hear disparaging comments about their teachers or an activity, for example, it may turn a positive experience into a negative one.

Give yourself some leeway as you adjust to taking on new responsibilities as a learning coach. The house may get messy. Things may get off schedule. This is natural as you and your child get used to creating a new routine.

Tips for Supporting Learners at Home

- Use a visual checklist or stickers to keep younger kids focused on completing tasks.
- Model good learning habits, like how to take notes and stay organized.
- Help kids stay on track by having them write down their goals for the day.
- Talk to kids about distractions such as social media during school time. It may help to set up a separate login profile on the computer that restricts access to apps unrelated to learning.
- Encourage students to collaborate with their peers on schoolwork.

TIP:

An effective learning coach helps kids feel in control of their own learning. Wait until they ask for help before jumping in with your solution. If they're stuck, you might ask them a question like, “Where could you go for help?” instead of providing the answer.

Daily Check-Ins

Touching base with your children each day helps support them as they develop self-management skills. You might want to schedule a check-in at the end of the day to ask:

- What did you accomplish today that you hoped to?
- What did you discover? What was easy/hard?
- What do you need to do today so tomorrow will be a success?

TIP:

If you're looking for additional ideas to support your child's learning from home, check out [Learning Keeps Going](#).



WORKING WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Your child's teacher is primarily responsible for designing the learning experience. As a learning coach, having good parent-teacher communication is critical to supporting your child.

When communicating with teachers, remember that their job is complicated, and they may be balancing many students with different needs. Starting out by thanking them for their work goes a long way.

Questions to Ask Your Child's Teacher or School

- Are there learning apps you will be using that I need to make sure my child has access to?
- Who do I contact if I have technical problems with the platforms the school is using for online learning?
- What materials will my child need to succeed, and how can I get them?
- What are your classroom routines, and how can we support them at home?
- How do we contact school guidance counselors or a social worker?
- Do you have any questions for us?

SUPPORTING SPECIAL NEEDS

If you have a student with special needs or an individualized education program (IEP), talk to school staff about what options and services are available for distance learning. If your child receives speech, occupational or physical therapy, or other related services from your school, ask how these services will continue.

More information about supporting learner needs is available at the [Educating All Learners](#) website.

DON'T GO IT ALONE

Remember, when it comes to learning from home, you're part of a team. Don't hesitate to ask for help from school staff or family members when you need support. For example, you can:

- Team up with a family member or fellow parent to share supervisory duties. Reach out to your local parent-teacher organization for ways to connect.
- Get help from older students or professional tutors online if your child needs assistance with a concept or lesson.
- Consult your school guidance counselor or social worker.