



Learning Together

Tips for parents who are temporarily “homeschooling”

- **RELAX and STAY HEALTHY** Take it day by day. Eat healthy foods, get lots of sleep, exercise, hydrate. Be patient with your children, and with yourself. Allow breaks as needed. You will have plenty of time. Working 1-on-1 it won't take all day to complete assignments. Remember, you have been given several weeks of work all at once. Don't let that overwhelm you. This can be an opportunity to have some great conversations and connections, since you won't be rushing to sports and other activities.
- **DEVELOP a ROUTINE** Structure is important, but it is also important to stay flexible. Your teenager may work better if she sleeps in (within reason) and works later in the afternoon. Let the kids help develop the schedule and set daily goals. Don't try to do every subject every day. It may make more sense to spend an extended time on a long-term assignment and leave other subjects until the next day. Do incorporate some exercise each day. If it is raining outside try some simple cardio, skipping in place and doing jumping jacks. There are some good routines on YouTube, such as [this one sponsored by Fitbit](#).
- **SPACE for LEARNING** If possible, set aside a study space. It doesn't have to be elaborate. For a kindergartener, it may simply mean putting a sign that says “SCHOOL-GRADE K” on your dining room table. An older child who works well independently may want to stay in her room. Eliminate distractions such as television and cell phones, unless they are being used for learning.
- **SET EXPECTATIONS** It is normal for kids to try to take advantage of being at home. For your younger children, try following the expectation system used in their classrooms. For example, they may have a daily behavior chart with a variety of levels such as “Outstanding” and “Consequences.” With your children, develop a similar chart and monitor behaviors throughout the day. Build in reward systems such as “Pay and Play.” (This is a good way to control video game or other screen time.) Frequent breaks, exercising, and playing outside between tasks will help.
- **READ, READ, READ** Anything you have in the house will do, from books to food labels. Kids of all ages love being read to. Older children can read to their younger siblings. If this is all you do in a day that's OK. Change it up and give yourself a break by having your child read her teacher's blog or find a story online. Elementary teacher Kate Brucie, for example, is reading a story a day on YouTube. Her channel, [Ms. Brucie's Bookworms](#), features stories such as, “When the Crayons Came Home.”

- **ENCOURAGE WRITING** Journaling is a wonderful tool for reflection. Many teachers have suggested students write about how this viral outbreak has changed their lives. You are living history and it is important to record feelings and events during this difficult time. Children can write notes or emails to relatives and friends. Keep reasonable expectations and be careful not to be critical or try to correct all the spelling and punctuation. This may be difficult for you, but it is important. If your child has trouble finding things to write about, ask open-ended questions to encourage her thought process.
- **INCORPORATE LIFE SKILLS** This is your chance to involve the kids in daily living tasks. They need to know how to do laundry, sew on buttons, cook, and do household budgeting. Encourage resourcefulness. Use this time to introduce your hobbies to your children. Does someone in your family do woodworking or play a musical instrument? You now have time to incorporate this into your day. Include chores. Work together on that project you have been putting off, such as cleaning out the basement, garage or shed. What treasures you will find!
- **INDIVIDUAL LEARNING** Each child has her own personality. This time is especially difficult for those who are extroverts. Doing a lab with a partner over Facetime or working with a friend over the phone will help. Learning styles also differ. Hands-on learners can do some math while measuring ingredients or developing a shopping list. Some students can focus better while listening to music; others need complete quiet. Too much togetherness may cause some frustration among siblings. While you want to encourage them to help each other, recognize that they may need some time apart while they work.
- **EXTEND GRACE** This is a temporary situation and it was unexpected. As parents, students, and teachers, we are all trying our best to adjust. None of us is perfect. Patience, love, and understanding are priceless qualities. Pass them on. Enjoy your time making memories as a family!

References

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