



How to support home learning

Follow this guidance to create a positive learning environment at home

Be realistic about what you can do

You're not expected to become teachers and your children aren't expected to learn as they do in school. Simply **providing your children with some structure** at home will help them to adapt. Use the tips below to help you make this work for your household:

Be reflective, what's working and what isn't? Ask your children, involve them too;

Share the load if there are two parents at home. Split the day into 2-3 hour slots and take turns so you can do your own work too;

Take care of your own health and wellbeing. This will be new for your entire household, so give it time to settle. Take a look at the links at the end of this factsheet for some advice on mental health and wellbeing;

Keep distractions to a minimum- when you are focusing on learning, switch off the TV.

Keep to a timetable wherever possible

Create and stick to a routine if you can. This is what children are used to. For example, eat breakfast at the same time and make sure they're dressed before starting the 'school' day – avoid staying in pyjamas!

Involve your children in setting the timetable where possible. It's a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it'll give them ownership;

Check in with your children and try to keep to the timetable, but be flexible. If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend where possible;

If you have more than one child at home, **consider combining their timetables.** For example, they might exercise and do maths together – see what works for your household;

Designate a working space if possible, and at the end of the day have a clear cut-off to signal school time is over;

Stick the timetable up on the wall so everyone knows what they should be doing at what time, and tick activities off throughout the day. Be clear when you have finished;

Distinguish between weekdays and weekends, to separate school life and home life.

Make time for exercise and breaks throughout the day

Start each morning with a PE lesson at 9am with Joe Wicks;

If you have a **garden, use it regularly.** If you don't, try to get out **once a day** as permitted by the government (households can be together outdoors but 2 metres apart from others) ;

Get your children to **write in a diary what they did each day** – this can be a clear sign that the 'school' day has ended.

Other activities to keep children engaged throughout the day

Where you have more freedom in the timetable, **make time for other activities**. Add some creative time or watch a dance video from **Go Noodle** (for example) to get the heart-rate going;

Get your children to **write postcards** to their family members or to pen pals;

Ask **family members to listen to your children read** on FaceTime (or ask them to read to younger children);

Give them chores to do so they feel more responsible about the daily routine at home;

Ask them to **help you cook** and bake;

Accept that **they'll probably watch more TV/spend time on their phone** – that's ok but you might want to set/agree some screen time limits.

Stay safe on the Internet

Talk openly with your child about their online activity. As soon as your child starts accessing the internet, talk to them about what they are reading, watching and who they are communicating with online – and keep the conversation going as they grow older;

Keep screens and devices where you can see them. Always monitor your child's time online, particularly younger children. **Keep the computer in a central spot in the home** where it's easy to keep an eye on what your child is doing and viewing online;

Teach your children to keep their location private. Most apps, networks and devices have geo-tagging features which make your whereabouts public and can lead someone directly to you. These features should be turned off for obvious privacy and safety reasons;

Be 'share aware' to protect your privacy. If your child is a regular user of social networks, they must **be aware of the risk of personal information or images being made public** once they post it. Encourage your children to ask themselves before posting anything if the information (i.e. name, phone number, home address, email, name of school) or photo is something they would give a stranger. If the answer is no, don't post it;

Reassure them that you're interested in their life, offline and online. Recognise that they'll be using the internet to research homework as well talking to their friends;

Be positive but also open about anything you're worried about. You could say "I think this site's really good" or "I'm a little worried about things I've seen here." Ask them if they're worried about anything, and let them know they can come to you.

Well Being

You might be noticing signs of increasing anxiety in your child as they're spending more time indoors, and are outside of their normal routines. These might include:

For pupils ages 3-6 years:

- Regressing to behaviour they've outgrown, such as thumb-sucking or bed-wetting;
- Showing greater fear at being separated from you;
- Tantrums;
- Trouble sleeping.

For pupils ages 7-10 years:

- Expressing sadness, anger or fear;
- Sharing false information that they're hearing from their peers or seeing online;
- Wanting to talk about coronavirus all the time;
- Not wanting to talk about the current situation at all;
- Having trouble concentrating.

How to talk to your child about what's happening. No matter how calmly you manage the current environment, children are likely to be anxious, so it's important to talk to them about current events.

For younger children

Children pick up bits of information from their friends, from the news and from listening to adults talking around them – but they can misunderstand what they're hearing.

Deal with the news head-on and talk about it openly and calmly, giving them the facts.

Give them age-appropriate information – take a look at:

- BBC Newsround hub – regularly updated with information and advice www.bbc.co.uk/newsround
- #covibook for under 7s – <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>
- Children's guide to coronavirus – a download from the Children's Commissioner to help explain the situation to children www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/childrens-guide-to-coronavirus/

Teach them how to know if information they find on the internet is reliable. Explain how some stories on social media may be based on rumours or inaccurate information

Encourage them to take breaks from listening to or reading the news – overexposure isn't helpful.

Encourage questions

This will give them the confidence to reach out, if they have anything to ask;

Be reassuring but honest when answering questions – it's ok if you don't have all the answers;

Be ready to answer the same question over and over – children tend to repeat themselves when they're feeling uncertain or worried, so you might have to answer the same questions more than once as they seek extra reassurance.

Be a role model

Recognise and manage your own worries first;

Be open about your own feelings and let them know it's normal to be concerned – for example, let them know you're also finding the news a bit worrying and what you're doing to stay calm;

Explain how our body's immune system protects us

It's constantly working against germs without us knowing. We can't and don't need to control this process. It happens without us worrying about it;

Explain that we're taking precautions against this particular germ because it's a new one which our bodies haven't come across before;

Remind them how important it is that they eat healthy food, sleep and exercise, as this helps to fight germs;

If it helps, reassure them that the effects of this virus on healthy young people are very mild.

Keep doing your bit to help children reduce the spread of germs

Remind them to maintain good hygiene like bathing daily and wearing fresh clothes; Encourage them to sing 'happy birthday' twice when they're washing their hands.

For older children

Older children will have the same anxieties about their own health and that of their family and friends as younger children. But they're also likely to feel socially isolated, and worried about the result of school closures on their education and what life will be like after the pandemic is over.

In addition to the steps above:

Reassure them that when more guidance comes from the school about how grades will be awarded, you'll share this with them as soon as you can – you could also check that they understand the information you've received so far, in case there are any points of confusion or worry that the school could help to clarify.

Encourage them to maintain social ties – relationships are especially important for older children, so give them room to keep in touch with their friends

Equip them with accurate information – for example:

- Mythbusters from the World Health Organization www.who.int
- Data visualisation pack from Information is Beautiful (regularly updated) <https://informationisbeautiful.net/>

Share tools to help them manage anxiety

- YoungMinds: practical steps to take if you're anxious about coronavirus <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
 - Mind: how to take care of your wellbeing when staying home www.mind.org.uk
- Some children are naturally more anxious, especially those with existing phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorders. The current situation can make those anxieties worse;
- Get them to do activities such as counting, ordering and sorting tasks which can help them calm down;
- Encourage them to use relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing;
- Look out for obsessive or compulsive behaviours and try to get ahead of them early by challenging unhelpful thoughts and assumptions;
- If you're worried about your child's anxiety, **YoungMinds** is a charity dedicated to children's mental health. They've opened a parents' helpline for confidential, expert advice. You can reach them at 0808 802 5544.

We are always here to help if you have any questions or need any support.

Empower – Motivate – *Aspire* – Transform - Be Proud – Connect

