

Supporting Our Children with Online Learning: Tips For Parents From Parents



Many early childhood educators and families of young children have been launched into the world of online learning in 2020. Below are just a few tips from parents for parents on how to support children and yourself during online learning experiences.

Setting up the Environment

- ▶ **Create a physical space** where your child is comfortable learning. This should be a space that is free from distractions and provides comfortable and supportive seating with appropriate table height for their size. Include your child’s favorite materials in the space such as paper your child likes to use or markers that are reinforcing for your child.
- ▶ If there are multiple children or adults trying to work or learn in a small space, try to **stagger the use of shared space** (e.g., kitchen table) with a posted schedule for everyone to see.
- ▶ **Consider using a box or storage bin** with a lid to keep each person’s (including your child’s) work or learning materials and supplies in one place.
- ▶ If you have multiple people in your household using on-line learning or web meetings, **use headphones to reduce the noise**.
- ▶ **Practice the technology ahead of time** if possible.
- ▶ If available **watch videos**, sent by teachers, that are intended to pre-teach certain experiences. Examples might include how to enter into the virtual classroom, use and look at the camera, mute and unmute the microphone or change the background of the screen.

Schedules and Routines

- ▶ **Daily family routines** allow for many opportunities for your child to learn in the moment. For instance, you can count as you brush your teeth together or wash your hands, include your child when you write the grocery list for letter and word recognition, sing stories or read books.
- ▶ **Balance online activities** (where children are sitting and listening) with active and movement-based activities such as building with blocks, playing outside, or taking a walk.
- ▶ **Create a schedule** that works within your family’s routines. This will allow for natural learning opportunities throughout your day and alleviate added stress trying to “fit things in.”
- ▶ It is recommended children (3-5 years) be engaged in **adult directed activities for no more than 20 minutes at a time** without some movement or brain breaks such as a snack, or opportunities to move.
- ▶ **Visual schedules** help children and adults with predictability and adds a sense of routine (or calmness) and lets everyone know what is happening throughout the day. Schedules and routines can be represented with objects, pictures, line drawings and/or words.



Managing Expectations

Identify your family's goals for your child's participation in online school and set expectations associated with what your family hopes to achieve in virtual learning. You might prioritize virtual social interaction for your child, exposure to academic content, or you might feel that virtual school helps build structure in your child's day. Any of these are appropriate expectations for a family in this time of virtual learning. Once you have determined your family's expectations for virtual learning, it might be helpful to discuss them with your child's teacher.



Communication:

- ▶ **Be direct.** Teachers may not know what is working for your family, so let them know the activities and parts of the experience your child enjoyed, and let them know if something is challenging.
- ▶ **Be kind.** Kindness helps your message to be digested and helps positive relationships to flourish. Examples of kindness include verbal and/or written positive feedback to your child's teacher. When something is challenging and you would like to see it done differently, you can start the conversation by saying "What would be really helpful for our family is..."
- ▶ **Do not be afraid to ask questions.** You are the expert on your child. For example, if aspects of online learning are not working for you, let your teachers know and work toward a solution.



Helpful Terms:

Schedule

A schedule represents the big picture—the main activities to be completed daily.

https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Routine_cards_home.pdf

Routines

Routines represent the steps done to complete the schedule.

https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/TeachingYourChild_routines.pdf

Brain Break

A brain break is a short period of time when online learning is interrupted and the child is allowed to engage in 5-10 minutes of preferred physical activity.

<https://www.unicef.org/kidpower/brain-breaks-for-kids/#:~:text=Brain%20Breaks%20for%20kids%20is,for%20largely%20the%20same%20effect.%00>