

# Working and Learning from Home During the COVID-19 Outbreak

To help contain COVID-19, many schools moved children to online learning at home. In addition, many parents are being asked to work from home. These forms of social distancing are needed to help slow the spread of the virus and prevent overloading the health care system.

But many families now face new challenges: how do we care for our children while working and schooling at home, and not panic during this unprecedented outbreak? The first step: take a deep breath. Know that we are all in this together. And together we will get through it.

Here are some other tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics to help you cope with this “new normal” until the virus is under control.

## Slow the spread

It may be tempting to get kids together for play dates or sleepovers, but this should be avoided. Social distancing only works if we all participate. And slowing down or preventing the spread of the virus will save lives.

**Protect grandparents.** This is also not the time to visit grandparents or ask them to help out with child care duties. People who are over age 60 are at higher risk of severe illness with COVID-19 and should not increase that risk by being around children who may be ill with mild symptoms. However, they may feel alone or disconnected during social distancing, so keep up communications through phone calls, texting, or video chats.

## Keep a routine

Since changes in routine can be stressful, it will be helpful to talk with your kids about why they are staying home and what your daily structure will be during this time. Let them help create a daily schedule that can hang on the refrigerator or somewhere they can see it each day. Be sure to include breaks from tele-work or schoolwork to relax and connect with each other.

Here are some ideas to help you create a daily schedule:

- Wake up, get dressed and have breakfast at the normal time.
- Decide where everyone can do their work most effectively and without distractions.
- List the times for learning, exercise and breaks.
  - For younger children, 20 minutes of class assignments followed by 10 minutes of physical activity might work well.
  - Older children and teens may be able to focus on assignments for longer stretches, taking breaks between subjects.
  - Include your hours as well, so your children know when the work day is done.
- Schedule time for nutritious lunches and snacks. Many schools are providing take-home school meal packages for students who need them.
- Don't forget afternoon breaks as well!
- Have dinner together as a family and discuss the day.

- Enjoy more family time in the evenings, playing, reading, watching a movie or exercising together.
- Stick with normal bedtime routines as much as possible during the week to make sure everyone gets enough sleep.

**Try not to have the news on all day.** It is best not to have the news on while kids are in the room as it can increase their fear and anxiety (and yours!). If they do listen to the news, talk together about what they are hearing and correct any misinformation or rumors you may hear.

## Should I worry about extra screen time right now?

While limits are still important, it's understandable that under these stressful circumstances, kids' screen media use will likely increase. Here are some ways to help keep media use positive and helpful:

- **Contact teachers about educational online and offline activities your children should do.** Preschool teachers may not have an online curriculum to share, but good options include PBS Kids, which is sending out a daily newsletter with show and activity ideas.
- **Use social media for good.** Check in with your neighbors, friends and loved ones. If schools are closed, find out if there are ways to help students who need meals or internet access for at-home learning.
- **Use media for social connection.** Social distancing can be isolating. If your kids are missing their school friends or other family, try video chats or social media to stay in touch.
- **Choose quality content and use trusted sources to find it.** Common Sense Media, for example, suggests 25 dance games and other active apps, websites, and video games for families hunkering down right now.
- **Use media together.** This is a great opportunity to monitor what your older children are seeing online and follow what your children are learning. Even watching a family movie together can help everyone relax while you appreciate the storytelling and meaning that movies can bring.
- **Take your child (virtually) to work.** Working from home? Use this time as a chance to show your kids a part of your world. Encouraging imaginative “work” play may be a way to apply “take your child to work day” without ever leaving home!
- **Limits are still important.** As always, technology use should not push out time needed for needed sleep, physical activity, reading, or family connection. Make a plan about how much time kids can play video games online with friends, and where their devices will charge at night.

## Remember

Staying at home and other social distancing recommendations may feel like an inconvenience, but it's the best way right now to protect our family, friends, and neighbors who may be vulnerable.

If anyone in your home starts showing symptoms of COVID-19, call your doctor to discuss what to do.

## Stay informed

Families are encouraged to stay up to date about this situation as we learn more about how to prevent this virus from spreading in homes and in communities.

For more parenting information from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), visit [www.HealthyChildren.org](http://www.HealthyChildren.org).

For the latest developments from the CDC, including travel warnings, new cases, and prevention advice, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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