VIRTUAL LEARNING
Tips for Getting Started

Compiled by

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• Learning Spaces
• Daily Routines
• Online Resources
“Involving our daughter in the process of creating the learning environment has been very beneficial. Dedicating a space for her to work and involving her in that process not only has increased her efficiency and productivity, but her attitude as well. It communicated a high value to what she was doing each day and she stepped up to meet that expectation. She is young but is already beginning to see the benefits of learning to function effectively in a virtual environment for her future.”

Geri - parent

“My youngest son needs a quiet learning environment to stay focused. He also enjoys taking his work out of our school room and working somewhere else for a while. His favorite spot is a ledge next to the stair.”

Holly - parent

CREATING A DEDICATED LEARNING SPACE

Space

- **Quiet** - Finding a space away from most household distractions such as pets, young children, and television will be the most productive.
- **Structured** - Providing an organized learning space with needed materials is conducive to productive learning. Chaos and excessive clutter detract from the learning environment making it difficult to stay focused.
- **Monitored** - Balancing independence with accountability and supervision is also helpful especially in the beginning. Being in close proximity to your student in order to monitor progress and internet usage helps ensure a safe and productive learning environment.
- **Mobile option** - Identifying a dedicated storage area to keep supplies for easy set up and take down will be important. If space is limited or work areas will have dual-functions you may want to consider a rolling cart or basket to hold schooling items that can be easily stored away when school is over.

Supplies

- **Computer with internet access** - A computer is necessary for many aspects of virtual learning. Online lessons or text books, emails, video calls all may become a part of your student’s schooling for a time. Many online resources are available and can enhance the virtual learning experience.
- **Books for independent reading** - Having a few books to read at the students independent reading level can help them break away from prolonged times in front of a screen. It also helps with scheduling when computers are limited.
- **Headset and optional webcam** - Webcams are useful (but not necessary) as part of online learning groups. Headsets are helpful in reducing noise distractions if multiple students are working in close proximity.
- **Phone or digital camera** - Taking pictures of projects to submit with assignment increases the hands-on learning.
- **Printer** - A printer will be helpful should your school district provide printable resources
- **Posted schedule** - Having a posted schedule with specific times for lessons, family, and individual activities on a whiteboard or a weekly planner can be helpful for managing time and space. It is a visual reminder of the tasks and hand and supports a mutual respect while sharing space and working side by side.
- **School supplies** - Supplies such as notebooks, folders, pens, pencils and paper help students stay in “school mode” as they work. These supplies will be useful in helping to establish routine as well.
“I feel really comfortable at home so to be honest it is really easy to get distracted! Especially by my dog. What has helped me the most to stay focused while learning at home is having a plan that I can refer to. I check my planner every day so I know what I’m supposed to work on and that helps keep me on track. I try and work through what I have on my list for each day checking off what I have completed. This way I know what I have left to do and I feel a sense of accomplishment. That has been one of the best ways for me to stay on task.”

Mae - 8th grader

“I start out with two minutes of silence every day, to help me get focused. It really works!”

Piper - 2nd grade

Seating

Virtual learning typically requires more screen time and sitting than students may be used to. To prevent discomfort and added strain to the neck and back you may want to consider the following ergonomic recommendations.

- **Size of desk** - The student’s desk or work surface and chair should be an appropriate size.
- **Work surface** - Ideally a work surface should be waist height with the ability to rest elbows on the desk or table.
- **Working Posture** - A students should be able to place feet flat on the floor or use a footrest.
- **Monitor distance** - The computer monitor should be about an arm’s length away with the top third of the screen at the student’s eye level.

Sharing

You may be required to work at home for a time and wonder how sharing a space with your student will work. It is natural for tensions to be higher when working in close quarters with others. A helpful way to operate in this situation is with interdependence, which is the understanding that we need each other and what we do impacts one another.

As parents, students, and educators, we are all in this together. Developing our ability to depend on each other for the best outcomes is a valuable life skill. Here are few things that might help.

- **Communicate openly** - Work together to create the best working environment. Talking it over and involving your student to allow for ownership of this new school experience will prove to be very helpful in many ways.
- **Make a plan** - Make a plan for location, organization of space, materials and items needed for successful cooperation.
- **Share responsibilities** - Determine shared responsibilities for respecting one another and maintaining the shared space.
“Our daily schedule pulls each subject out but realistically in our day many subjects connect and integrate. For example, one of my kids’ favorite activities is drawing or sculpting something out of history lesson while I read it. Cooking is a great connection for math, science & health education. When students are able to connect it is very enriching!”

Danielle - parent

“My primary focus is that my kids enjoy learning. So, if I see that something is hard and frustrating for them we take a break and go do something else. Sometimes we try again another day. A good indicator that my children are understanding what they have learned is that they can teach the concept back to me. They often do this with math.”

Holly - parent

ESTABLISHING A DAILY ROUTINE

Many parents find themselves working at home as well and wondering how this is all going to work. Even if you feel unprepared to provide school at home, as a parent you have much to offer your student no matter what age they are. You have been facilitating their learning since the day came into the world and you are up for this task. Here are a few tips that may help you to feel more prepared.

1. Set Expectations

- **Draft a Schedule** - You can create a personalized daily or weekly schedule by assigning lesson subjects to preferred days within the week and specific times. If juggling multiple subjects each day seems daunting you might consider creating a block schedule and spend larger chunks of time in one content areas on specific days.
- **Involve your child** - You may want to include your student in the decision-making process when creating the schedule. Considering the students preferred times to complete various subjects as you create the schedule together creates buy-in and increases motivation.
- **Include Quiet Reading Time** - Also, a time for quiet independent reading or audio book reading is important to include in your daily schedule.
- **Stay Flexible** - As your student begins to complete lessons, you may find that one subject requires extra time, while another requires less. You may also have demands on your time with working from home and other children to attend to. Schedule your days accordingly but allow for flexibility when needed.

2. Facilitate Learning

- **Be available for support** - Assist with lessons by discussing topics with your student, check for understanding, explain unknown vocabulary. Provide guidance with lessons and answer questions as needed. Discuss real world connections.
- **Communicate with support network** - Reach out to the supports available to you. The educators in your area want to assist you and your child however they can.
- **Provide Encouragement** - Some people respond to encouraging words, while others prefer a high five or quality time together. Think about ways your student receives encouragement. Get creative and write your ideas down to refer to often. A little encouragement at the right time can make a big difference in stamina and motivation.
“I like when my mom is sitting next to me. I also get a prize from the dollar store at the end of the week when I stay focused and get all my work done.”

Colter - 1st grader

“I stay really focused so I get my work done faster. I know as soon as I’m finished for the day I can go out and be with my horses.”

Kollyns - 3rd grader

“I like it when I get to color!”

Anja - kindergartener

3. Support Motivation

- **Celebrate growth** - A focus on growth fosters a safe environment and a resilience in students that is essential for great accomplishment. Students who believe they can learn a skill will be more successful doing so.
- **Get in on the action** - Model and demonstrate, read to young children and alongside older children. Think aloud when problem-solving together.
- **Check for understanding** - Motivation drops if students are confused or stuck without clear understanding of what to do next. Coming alongside to talk things through or to clarify some confusion will help keep the motivation high.
- **Set attainable goals** - Goals are most effective when they are specific and short term. Goals should be challenging but attainable and connected to a previously learned skill. Motivation increases when the student knows the steps to take in order to achieve the goal.
- **Provide Incentive as needed** - Earning rewards can be motivating for some students. You have a unique insight at to what incentives work best for your student. Providing those incrementally when stamina is low can boost motivation.
ONLINE RESOURCES

**Recommended Websites for Teachers and Parents**

Babelfish.com - [www.babelfish.com/](http://www.babelfish.com/)
Common Sense media - [http://www.commonsensemedia.org/](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/)

Education Oasis - [www.educationoasis.com](http://www.educationoasis.com)
Getting Smart - [https://www.gettingsmart.com/2015/08/parents-can-prepare-for-their-role-in-virtual-school/](https://www.gettingsmart.com/2015/08/parents-can-prepare-for-their-role-in-virtual-school/)
Jing - [www.techsmith.com/jing.html](http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html)
MoMA (The Museum of Modern Art) - [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)
Word Reference - [www.wordreference.com/](http://www.wordreference.com/)
YouCanBookMe - [https://youcanbook.me/](https://youcanbook.me/)
Wordle - [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)
Zamzar - [www.zamzar.com](http://www.zamzar.com)

**Teacher Lesson Planning and Differentiation Resources**

K12 Reader - [www.k12reader.com/](http://www.k12reader.com/)
Achieve the Core - [http://achievethecore.org/](http://achievethecore.org/)
Education Place - [https://www.eduplace.com/](https://www.eduplace.com/)
Free Reading - [http://freereading.net/](http://freereading.net/)
Gimkit (Live Quiz Learning Game) (*for students over 13 only*) - [https://www.gimkit.com/](https://www.gimkit.com/)
Google: Search Education - [www.google.com/insidesearch/searcheducation/](http://www.google.com/insidesearch/searcheducation/)
Illustrative Mathematics Free Resources - [http://www.illustrativemathematics.org/free-resources/](http://www.illustrativemathematics.org/free-resources/)
INSIDE MATHEMATICS - [https://www.insidemathematics.org/](https://www.insidemathematics.org/)
Khan Academy - [www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)
Learning and Leading with Technology - [http://www.learningandleading-digital.com/learningandleading](http://www.learningandleading-digital.com/learningandleading)
LibriVox - https://librivox.org/
NEWS ESA - http://newsela.com
PBS Learning Media - www.pbslearningmedia.org/
ReadWorks.org - www.readworks.org
ReadWriteThink - www.readwritethink.org
StudySpanish - www.studyspanish.com/index.htm
TED-Ed - http://ed.ted.com
TextProject - http://textproject.org
Thinkport - www.thinkport.org
YouCubed - http://www.youcubed.org

Technology /Project Creation
Arty Factory - www.artyfactory.com
GCFLearnFree.org - http://www.gcflearnfree.org/
Loom (students over 13) - https://www.loom.com/
Sumo Paint - www.sumopaint.com

Student Reference
CitationBuilder - www.lib.ncsu.edu/citationbuilder/
Storybird - www.storybird.com
Fact Monster - www.factmonster.com
Grammarly - https://www.grammarly.com/
Gapminder - http://www.gapminder.org/
Merriam Webster - www.merriam-webster.com/
Purdue online Writing Lab (OWL) -
https://owl.purdue.edu/writinglab/the_writing_lab_at_purdue.html
WordReference - www.wordreference.com/

College/Career Preparation and Planning
Academic Earth - www.academicearth.org
College Board - www.collegeboard.org
Federal Student Aid - https://studentaid.gov/
Free Application For Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) -
www.fafsa.ed.gov
Science
3D Brain (Mobile app) -
Centre of the Cell - www.centreofthecell.org
Complete Chemistry (Mobile app) -
Complete Physics (Mobile app) -
Ecological Footprint - http://www.myfootprint.org/
HubbleSite - www.hubblesite.org/
Learn.Genetics - http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/
Molecularium - http://nanospace.molecularium.com/
National Museum of American History -
http://americanhistory.si.edu/
Newseum - www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/
Nobel Prize Educational Games -
www.nobelprize.org/educational/
Periodic Table (Mobile app) -
PhET Interactive Simulations, University of Colorado -
http://phet.colorado.edu/
Physics Classroom - http://physicsclassroom.com/
SAS Curriculum Pathways -
https://www.sascurriculumpathways.com
Science Daily - www.sciencedaily.com
Science Dictionary (mobile app)
US National Park Service - Junior Ranger -
https://www.nps.gov/kids/become-a-juniorspark.htm
Visual Anatomy (Mobile app) -
WeatherSpark - http://weatherspark.com/
**Social Studies**
- Arches National park - [http://www.nps.gov/arch/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/arch/index.htm)
- Birmingham Civil Rights Institute - [https://www.beri.org/](https://www.beri.org/)
- Colonial Williamsburg - [www.history.org](http://www.history.org)
- Digital History - [www.digitalhistory.uh.edu](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu)
- Field Museum - [http://fieldmuseum.org/](http://fieldmuseum.org/)
- Harry S. Truman Library and Museum - [www.trumanlibrary.org](http://www.trumanlibrary.org)
- History Channel - [www.history.com](http://www.history.com)
- iCivics - [https://www.icivics.org/](https://www.icivics.org/)
- KidsGeo.com - [www.kidsgeo.com](http://www.kidsgeo.com)
- Nation Museum of American History - [http://americanhistory.si.edu/](http://americanhistory.si.edu/)
- Nation Underground Railroad Center - [www.freedomcenter.org/](http://www.freedomcenter.org/)
- Our Documents - [www.ourdocuments.gov](http://www.ourdocuments.gov)
- PlimothPlantation - [https://www.plimoth.org/](https://www.plimoth.org/)
- TIME For Kids - [www.timeforkids.com](http://www.timeforkids.com)
- Smithsonian Education - [www.smithsonianeducation.org/](http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/)
- Stop Disasters! - [https://www.stopdisastersgame.org/](https://www.stopdisastersgame.org/)
- WORLDMAPPER - [www.worldmapper.org/](http://www.worldmapper.org/)

**Literature/Poetry**
- Classic Literature - [www.classic-literature.co.uk](http://www.classic-literature.co.uk)
- Poetry App (Mobile app) - [http://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/mobile](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/mobile)
- Poets.org - [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org)
- StickFigure Hamlet - [http://www.stickfigurehamlet.com/](http://www.stickfigurehamlet.com/)
- Victorian Web - [www.victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org)
Activities/Games for Math and Language Arts (Primary)
ABCya - www.abcya.com/
BBC: Words and Pictures -
www.bbc.co.uk/education/wordsandpictures/phonics/
Carl’s Corner - wwwcarlscorner.us.com/
Education place Shapebook -
https://www.deuplace.com/shpebook/
KidsNumbrs.com - wwwmakingbooks.com/freeprojects.shtml
Math Play - www.math-play.com/
Math Playground - www.mathplayground.com
National Library of Virtual Manipulatives -
http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary.html
Merriam Webster Word Central - www.wordcentral.com
MyVocabulary - http://www.myvocaubulary.com/
PBS Kids - pbskids.org
Seseme Street - https://sesamestreet.org
Seussville - www.sheppardsoftware.com/
Sheppard software - www.sheppardsoftware.com/

Activities/Games for Math and Language Arts (Secondary)
AAA Math - www.aaamath.com
Machinarium - http://mahinarium.net/demo/
Math Open Reference - www.mathopenfret.com/
Math Play - www.math-play.com/
MathPlayground - www.mathplayground.com
Virtual Nerd - http://www.virtualnerd.com/
Vocabulary - www.vocabulary.com
YouCubed - https://www.youcubed.org
Writer’s Almanac - http://writersalmanac.org/

Art Resources
The Getty - https://www.getty.edu/visit/center/
Google Art Project - www.googleartproject.com/
Guggenheim Museum - www.guggenheim.org/
The Metropolitan Museum of Art - www.metmuseum.org
Sketch Toy - https://sketchtoy.com
Smithsonian - www.si.edu
Sumo Paint - www.sumopaint.com
Health/Physical Education
American Cancer Society - www.cancer.org
American Heart Association - http://www.heart.org/
Center for Disease Control (CDC) - www.cdc.gov

Music
Music Theory - https://www.musictheory.net

Foreign Language
ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) - http://www.actfl.org/
French Culture exchange - http://www.frenchculture.org/
LangMedia - http://langmedia.fivecolleges.edu/
SpinTX - http://www.coerll.utexas.edu/spintx/
StudySpanish - www.studyspanish.com/indes.htm