

11 TIPS FOR FAMILIES



How can families support children who are home for an extended period of time?

1 Maximize structure to the extent possible.

- Institute a regular schedule Monday-Friday with an agreed-on wakeup time and designated hours for instructional time (e.g., work sent home, online modules suggested by the school, reading books, etc.).

2 Establish expectations and incentives for what these hours will look like, for example:

If you set aside two hours, the schedule could look something like this:

- First 30 minutes: complete silent reading (could be a chapter book, iReady, assignment sent from school).
- Second 30 minutes: complete math activity (could be assignment sent from school, online module, or around-the-house project, e.g., measuring the dimensions of a room or figuring out cost of groceries).
- Third 30 minutes: social skill building activity (could be writing a story about how to help people during this time, instructions about how to be a responsible student while at home, writing dialogue for two people resolving a conflict appropriately).
- Fourth 30 minutes: social studies or science (could be assignment sent from school, quick report or reflection on current events and headlines).

Prompt for appropriate behavior; you could use statements like these:

- "Being on-task at home looks like focusing on your work, leaving your phone in the other room, and completing your assignments."
- "When you complete an assignment [or read a chapter, or complete an online module], write a one-paragraph reflection on what you learned."

3 Keep them engaged.

- Even if they're just watching TV, ask them to tie it into something related to a school subject or a social skill (e.g., conflict resolution, discussing serious topics, active listening) and write a quick reflection.
- If you have younger children at home, older children can teach them mini-lessons using some of the suggestions on this page.

4 Establish incentives for completing desired activities:

- "After every 30 minutes of work, you can take a 5-minute break and check your phone."
- "If you can work quietly for one hour, you can have extended time outside this afternoon."
- Have something ready if they make it through the entire planned academic schedule (e.g., select what's for dinner, free from a chore); this can build up throughout the week (e.g., "If you can make it through three days of your academic schedule, you can earn...").

5 Use this time.

- Consider using this time to get children working on projects around your living space, even if they're simple ones: taking inventory of all towels and sheets, cleaning closets, organizing and cleaning – and celebrate completion of these projects together.

We realize that without the day-to-day structure of school, it may be challenging to keep your children occupied. Here are some additional tips for having children home for an extended period of time:

6

Keep your expectations realistic.

- Know your child's abilities and limitations. These are confusing and stressful times for adults, and children are learning how to deal with this, too. If they seem frustrated or upset, offer breaks from whatever is happening. Sometimes a change of scenery or a quick task that will bring a feeling of success (e.g., "Can you go count up how many cans of soda we have in the refrigerator for me?") can be a big help.

8

Offer choices that are limited and reasonable.

- If children are not interested in getting to work, let them choose the order of assignments, length of time, or topics. (For example, "Would you like to start with math or social skills?" or "You can do 15 minutes on one topic and 45 minutes on another, your choice").

10

Catch children being good.

- Don't wait until they start fidgeting or complaining to address behavior. When they're sitting quietly, say, "I'm glad you're sitting quietly – thank you."

11

Stay calm.

- While this can be a challenge, remember that an angry reaction may be what your child wants. If there's an issue, take a moment and a deep breath before responding.
- If there's an incident, wait until everyone is calm (including you) before addressing it. No one is able to learn anything in the midst of a challenging situation. Afterward, debrief, focus on what to do differently next time, and start over.

7

Keep stating your expected behaviors in positive terms.

If you have to leave your children alone, remind them what they should be doing (e.g., "Remember to stay in the living room and keep the door locked") rather than what they shouldn't be doing (e.g., "Don't watch anything you shouldn't"), since telling people what not to do makes them think about what not to do.

- Remind your children about expected behavior while they're behaving well (e.g., "Hey guys, I like how you're talking together quietly. Thanks for the appropriate volume").

9

Use "When... Then..." statements.

- Instead of, "If you don't do this, you don't get to go outside," try, "When you finish this, then you can go outside." This sets a more positive tone and gives a clear expectation.



Additional resources:

- www.pbis.org/topics/family
- [Talking to children about coronavirus](#)