

Advice for parents and carers from the Department of Education, published April 19, 2020, to help primary school children continue their education during coronavirus (COVID-19)

While staying at home due to coronavirus (COVID-19), parents and carers will be concerned about their children's education and the impact of missing school.

No one expects parents to act as teachers, or to provide the activities and feedback that a school would. Speak to your school who will be planning work for your child to do. Parents and carers should do their best to help children and support their learning.

Structuring the day

Do not worry about trying to maintain a full routine for your child like they had at school. But children will feel more comfortable and learn better with a predictable routine to the day, even if this is difficult.

When schools provide children with work they may give you advice on how to structure the day. But generally, you should try to make sure that they:

- get up and go to bed at the same time each day
- have regular meal times
- have regular breaks
- make time to be active - children are used to regular play at lunch and break times

Using digital devices

Your child's school may set them work that can be done on a digital device such as a laptop, desktop, tablet or smartphone.

Set age-appropriate parental controls on any devices your child is using and supervise their use of websites and apps. Talk to your child about online safety.

Reducing screen time

Digital devices are not the only way to learn. Manage screen time with a timer and break up screen time by getting your child to:

- use books and other printed materials that their school has provided or that you have at home
- write by hand – try asking them to complete work by hand, write a diary, a summary of things they have learned or done each day or 'to do' lists
- be active and get away from the screen regularly for primary school children
- stop using digital devices at least an hour before bed

Reception, year 1 and year 2 children

The best way to help children aged 4 to 7 learn is to:

- sit with them as they work
- do active and practical things, rather than trying to make them sit and listen for long periods
- try to break down the work into shorter periods, based on how long they can concentrate
- take frequent breaks
- praise or reward them when they do well

Talking

Talk with your child throughout the day and try to explain new words. For example, discuss everything you are doing and pick out words that might be new to them.

Reading together

When you read with your child try to:

- express the emotion in the story
- give colour to the characters using voices, tone and pace
- discuss the things you are reading

You can make a story more interesting and help your child develop their understanding of a book by linking what you are reading to their life. For example, while reading about Cinderella going to the ball, talk about how a ball is similar to a birthday party.

Ask your child questions about what you are reading as you go. For example:

- ask some questions that only need a short answer, such as what colour something is, or the name of a character
- ask some questions that need a longer answer, such as how a character is feeling
- ask them to tell you what has happened in the story so far

Libraries are currently closed, but you can find digital services they are providing at Libraries Connected.

Phonics

Phonics is a method schools use to teach children how to read quickly and skilfully. Try to sit with your child and practise with them, following the advice you get from their school.

Writing.

Try to help children to continue to practise their writing. This may include the formation of letters and familiarity with pens and pencils for younger children or practising creative writing for older children.

Ask children to write about their day-to-day experiences of being at home, or to write letters to send to family members.

Numbers

Practise counting and numbers. This does not always have to be a planned activity. For example, count things around the house while you are doing other things like cooking or cleaning.