

Tips For Learning At Home

Dear parents/carers,

Due to COVID-19 it is no longer possible for students to have lessons at school. Many parents have been working from home since before the Easter holidays and are under pressure from their job, while also having to care for their children and help them with their learning.

This is an enormous challenge for all the family.

By now you may already be coming to terms with the situation and the challenges it brings at home. So please use the following hints for more ideas to support your child with learning and handling difficult situations at home.

Creating a good learning environment

Your children are being provided with work by their teachers. You do not have to take over teaching the lessons, but you can help to integrate learning into their daily routine and motivate your children.

Come up with a structure for the day together. It is best to get up at the time you are all used to and eat together at the same times of the day.

Watch how long you spend working; it should not be longer than usual. Free time and work should be strictly separated!

Most children will need help with organizing how much work to do each day, so as to divide the work equally throughout the week. It is a good idea to remind your children to start to start their work at the same time each day and not wait for a “better time” later on.

Regular breaks are important. Concentration normally slumps after 15-30 minutes.

You can help your children when they do not understand the tasks or do not know what to do next. It is important to communicate with teachers, if necessary.

It is very important to stay in contact with other students as well.

Provide a suitable place for learning that is free from distraction and where your children feel comfortable.

Motivating for learning

Explain to your child that the educational programme offered by school is important and that you are interested in the programme as well.

If your child refuses to learn or tends to procrastinate, choose the more interesting tasks to be done first. Annoyance and frustration often go along with the feeling of not having done a good job or having been too slow. In these situations it helps to come up with smaller, more manageable goals.

Encourage your children to have a go and support them at each step of the task. If necessary take a look at your children's work part way through. Praise their hard work and increasing independence. You should not only consider the quality of the results, but also the effort put in by your child.

Coping with conflicts

The current circumstances in which we live and work together for a long time in a confined space can be highly stressful. This can cause strong feelings such as fear, worry, sadness, boredom and sometimes even rage. You may have to abandon daily routines and put individual needs on hold. This can cause tension both for children and parents resulting in conflicts.

We advise parents to start off by dealing with their own strong emotions and impulses. **First calm yourself, then your child.** Don't talk about the trigger of the conflict until your child has calmed down. Tell your child that it is OK to be upset sometimes, but that they should not hurt anybody or break things. Try to build bridges to make it easier to apologize and make amends. Think about developing a routine for reconciliation.

To prevent conflicts, it is important to give each other some freedom with time and space for yourselves. Distractions can be a good strategy too. Choose activities that you enjoy, alone or together, and that enable you to relax.

Be patient

The current situation is demanding a lot of your whole family. Children are missing the structure and guidance they are used to, as well as personal contact with their teachers and peers. Often our expectations about what we and our children can achieve are too high. Talk about the things that you find helpful to deal with this very unusual situation, and about what helps you to do things that you do not feel like doing. Try to stay calm, even if not all days are equally productive.

Observe yourself and your child sympathetically:

- When and under which circumstances are things going well and when not so well?
- What was different on a more successful day?
- Who or what was helpful?

Further support

- If you have questions about how to improve the home learning environment or how to motivate your child you can **call or e-mail your local Educational Psychology Counselling Centre (Schulpsychologische Beratungsstelle)**: <https://zsl-bw.de/schulpsychologische-beratungsstellen>
- If you have questions about what to teach your child, the choice of appropriate equipment or studying techniques, get in touch with your child's teachers.
- For questions about parenting we recommend the online consulting services: www.bke-elternberatung.de (for parents) or www.bke-jugendberatung.de (for young people).
- You can find the contact details of your local parenting advice centre here: <http://lag-bw.net/beratungsstellen/>
- For phone support in a crisis contact: www.nummergegenkummer.de/kinder-und-jugendtelefon.html, 116 111 www.nummergegenkummer.de/elterntelefon.html, 0800 / 111 0 550

Talking with children about the COVID-19-Outbreak

Parents and carers should make sure they are well informed about the symptoms of COVID-19, safety precautions and supporting measures. It is important to teach your child day-to-day actions to **protect themselves and others against the virus**, for example regular hand washing and maintaining a safe distance.

Younger children might find it difficult to understand what a "virus" is. Try to use terms your child already knows. For example, explain that this is a disease that the body does not recognize. Reassure them that many adults around the world are working to find ways to protect us from it.

Share relevant, trustworthy and age-appropriate information with your child in a calm way. Listen and **ask your child what it wants to know**. Now more than ever, pay careful attention to your children's media consumption. The best way for children to watch the news is to watch it together with you.

If new and disturbing developments occur, take the time to sort out your own thoughts and feelings. Exchange ideas with other adults. In stressful situations children pay particular attention to the behaviours of adults. **Keeping calm**, both in what you say and your body-language, helps your children to get through stressful moments and develop coping strategies.

Teach your children that fear, anger or grief are normal in unusual crisis situations. Take your children's concerns seriously and think together about what might help you as a family to work through these feelings.