

# Top 10 Tips for Distance Learning for Parents

## 1. Establish routines and expectations

It is important to develop good habits from the start. Create a flexible routine and talk about how it's working over time. Chunk your days into predictable segments. Help students get up, get dressed and ready to learn at a reasonable time. Everybody make your bed! Keep normal bedtime routines, including normal rules for digital devices. Adjust schedules to meet everyone's needs but don't default to staying up late and sleeping in (However, a 'duvet day' now and then can be a treat).

## 2. Choose a good place to learn

Your family's regular learning space for occasional homework might not work for extended periods. Set up a physical location that's dedicated to school-focused activities. Make sure it is quiet, free from distractions and has a good internet connection. Make sure an adult monitors online learning. Keep doors open, and practice good digital safety. Our teachers will do the same.

## 3. Stay in touch

Teachers will mainly be communicating with parents through our email and with students through Google Classroom. Make sure everyone knows how to find the help they need to be successful. Stay in contact with classroom and support teachers and school leaders by emailing questions or concerns, or using the teacher Office Hours at the end of each day for clarification or support.

#### 4. Help students ‘own’ their learning

No one expects parents to be full-time teachers or to be educational and content matter experts. Provide support and encouragement, and expect your children to do their part. Struggling is allowed and encouraged! **Don’t help too much.** Becoming independent takes lots of practice and students learn best if they make mistakes. The teacher will support them.

#### 5. Begin and end the day by checking-in

**In the morning, you might ask:**

What can I do to help?

What classes/subject do you have today?

What resources do you need?

How will you spend your time?

**At the end of the day you might ask:**

What was hard?

What did you discover?

What could we do to make tomorrow better?

Do you have any assessments or assignments that are due?

Checking in with students to process instructions they received from their teachers helps them organize themselves and set priorities – older students too. Not all students thrive in distance learning; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines can help avoid later challenges and disappointments. They help students develop self-management and executive functioning skills that are essential skills for life.

## **6. Establish times for quiet and reflection**

For families with children of different ages, and parents who may also be unexpectedly working from home more often, it's good to build in some time for peace and quiet. Siblings may need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction. Many families will need to negotiate access to devices, priorities for wi-fi bandwidth and schedules throughout the day. Noise-cancelling headphones are a great tool for children to help with background noise and distractibility.

## **7. Encourage physical activity and exercise**

Living and working at home, we will all need some room to let off steam. Moving (independently and together as a family) is vital to health, wellbeing, and readiness for learning. It's a great opportunity to practice exercising 'alone together' with digital workouts and online instructors. Set new fitness goals and plan hands-on, life-ready activities that keep hands busy, feet moving, and minds engaged. You may want to think about how your children can pitch in more around the house with chores or other responsibilities. Now's a good time to think about increasing personal responsibility and pitching in.

## **8. Monitor time on-screen and online**

Distance learning does not mean staring at computer screens seven and half hours every day. Teachers will aim to build in variety, but it will require some trial and error before everyone finds balance between online and close-space offline learning experiences. Work together to find ways to prevent 'down time' from becoming just more 'screen time'.

## **9. Manage stress and make the most of an unusual situation**

We are going through a time of major upheaval to our normal routines and ways of life, and there's a great deal of anxiety in the world right now. Emotions may be running high, and children may be worried or fearful. Parents may be stressed as well and children are often keenly aware of trouble. Children benefit when they get age-appropriate factual information and ongoing reassurance from trusted adults. We have put in place layers of support for students, so please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher or school leader if you need assistance or advice. In these circumstances, it's often possible to reframe challenges as opportunities: for spending time together, discovering new ideas and interests, investing energy and attention in activities that often get pushed aside by everyday tasks and responsibilities. Experts advise that it's a good idea to slow down, find beauty, enjoy unexpected benefits, and express gratitude by helping others. The strength of our Palm Valley community will help see us through.

## **10. Connect safely with friends, and be kind**

By now, students are probably missing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Help your children maintain contact with friends through social media and other online technologies. But monitor your child's social media use. Remind your child to be polite, respectful and appropriate in their communications, and to follow school guidelines in their interactions with others. Report unkindness and other problems so that everyone maintains healthy relationships and positive interactions.