

VIRTUAL LEARNING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Tips for Parents, Teachers, and Early Interventionists

Setting the Stage



Sleep

Keep the same bedtime and wakeup times every day.
Preschoolers need 10 - 13 hours of sleep each day.
Wake your child up at least one hour before starting virtual learning.



Food

Give your child a healthy breakfast before starting virtual learning.



Physical space

It's best to create a separate space in the home for virtual school.
Find the best place in your home for online learning:

- Limit distractions from sights and sounds
- Find the best internet connections
- Provide light (best is from in front of your child, slightly above, on the opposite side from their writing hand)

Choose a chair and table that fits your child, allowing feet to rest on the floor if possible.



Visual schedule for the day

Include setting the stage (dress, breakfast, set up workspace), learning times, breaks, something fun and physical to do after school.



Choose a regular activity to do right before school—something that is:

- Not hard to end
- A brain break (no screens)
- Includes movement
- Examples: dancing together with music; taking a pet for a walk

During Learning Sessions

Preschoolers can only sit for about 8 to 10 minutes.

Observe your child to learn their cues for when they need a break.

Make a plan for how your child can request a break. For example, give them a few cards during each learning session; they can hold up the card to indicate they need a break.

Allow your child to experiment with what helps them to participate:

- Some children need to fidget, move around, or stand—movement doesn't necessarily mean they aren't learning
- Some children need to make noises— can they mute so it doesn't bother others?
- Some children need something to hold— a blanket, pillow, or stuffed animal

Add movement during breaks

Give visual cues for the schedule

Examples: count-down timer for work and break periods; visual schedule with pictures



After Learning Sessions



Give visual cue that school is over

Examples: remove school sign from workspace; close computer; move into a different part of the home; change clothes



Provide a screen-free break

Give their eyes a break from screens (phone, tablet, computer, TV, etc.)



Do a movement activity

Can be indoors but outside is even better. Adults join in too.

Overall Tips

Parents' job

Your relationship with your child is your most important job.

If teaching is interfering with your relationship with your child, let the teaching go.

If your child is struggling with school, support them emotionally— don't add more pressure.

Incorporate learning into play and daily activities

Examples:

- Talk about the colors and shapes of food while eating
- Name letters on street signs
- When cooking, teach math by counting, adding, and subtracting
- When bathing, squeeze the shampoo bottle to strengthen hands

Parents trying to work while child is in virtual school

Model working— sit next to your child with your own work to do.

Model taking a break.

Try visual cues to let your child know if you can be interrupted:

- Green = okay to interrupt
- Yellow = wait if you can
- Red = important meeting; do not interrupt unless it's an emergency

Forgive yourself—you're doing the best you can!

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