

Balancing effective remote working and a busy homelife

April 2020



Welcome to this guide to working at home whilst your children are around.

We have developed the document with the intention of helping adults to work at home, whilst supporting their children's learning and development. At the time of writing, we are all living and working through the COVID-19 global pandemic. Many of us are lucky to be able to work remotely, but the challenge of doing this at the same time as entertaining and educating children and young people is not an easy one.

Everything included here is taken directly from parents, carers and schools and we hope will provide you with ideas and tips to make it all a bit easier. The times we are living in are hopefully a once in a generation experience and hard as they are, our children will only be the ages they are once and it is unlikely that we will have so much time together with them again.

We hope this is helpful and encouraging material for you all and remember – none of us are stuck at home – we are safer at home.

Practical tips for working at home with your children

Amend your work life balance accordingly

- Start earlier before the children are up.
- Work around nap times.
- If your children don't nap, create a "quiet time" after lunch for two hours where they can read, draw, watch a movie for example. Make this a new routine.
- Break for lunch.
- Exercise with your children in the day.
- Set aside time after dinner to do reflection or reading emails.

Plan for the day ahead

- Get clothes out the night before.
- Get dressed for the day.
- Try to get up at the normal time for the start of school.
- Make up a packed lunch.
- Have break times.
- Use alarms to highlight the changeover of tasks or time of day.
- Set a daily timetable that the child can own and make decisions about when they need to do things – use a whiteboard or large piece of paper so they can mark their progress off and get a sense of achievement.
- Use pictures and colour-coding to mix days with what they like and don't like, what will help them to concentrate.

Tips on remaining productive and calm while working from home with children

- Separate your "workspace" from the rest of your personal space – try to work from a different room so the rest of the household know when you are working. This will also help you to "leave" work at the end of the day. If this is not possible clear your workspace at the end of the day.
- Be extra vigilant when making sure that children cannot hear discussions about your work, particularly if it is sensitive, confidential or potentially distressing. This is particularly relevant if you are carrying out meetings via skype or teleconference.
- Set yourself fewer goals everyday as you won't be able to achieve as much as you would if the children were not there with you. Do this by being clear on the urgent and important work tasks. Use the Eisenhower box to see what are the priorities to work on:

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	DO Tax deadline Wife in labor Project deadline	DECIDE Exercise Family time Weekly planning
Not Important	DELEGATE Phone calls Text messages Most email	DELETE Social media (most of the time) Watching TV Sorting through junk mail

- Don't be too hard on yourself – having a daily routine is good to support productivity yet some days the routine won't work. Accept this and you'll feel more productive the next day.
- Enjoy the time you are not working – it can be frustrating trying to work and look after your children at the same time. Try to separate the slots – work when you work (and make sure everyone knows you are working) and enjoy family time when you don't work. Be fully present in each and it will reduce the stress.

Online resources to support learning

- [Primary Education Resources](#)
- [Times Table Rock Stars](#)
- [Free home study packs](#)
- [Secondary Education resources](#)
- [Virtual field trips](#)
- [Screen-free things to do](#)
- [Educational videos - science](#)
- [Learn British Sign Language](#)
- [Chester Zoo – a virtual tour of the zoo](#)
- [Joe Wicks daily PE](#)
- [Horrible Histories](#)
- [Virtual museum tours](#)
- [Edinburgh Zoo – live web cams](#)
- [Virtual library resources](#)
- [Whatsonstage.com](#) – musicals, opera, stage shows
- [Kids Activities Blog](#)
- [Free online things to do for everyone](#)
- [Hoop - Find Everything Going On for Kids](#)



Make sure you read our guidance for parents about staying safe online!



Think creatively about how you can support your child to stay in touch with their family members during any period of self-isolation. Skype and Facetime can be great ways to catch up and can be used to read stories, sing and play together. With older children you could also consider a watch party – where you gather online to watch a movie or video, commenting and ‘reacting’ in real time.

TECHNOLOGY IS MORE EFFECTIVE WHEN USED TOGETHER



Engage



Communicate



Learn



Create

Keeping everyone entertained

Play or Do

- Tent using pegs and blanket
- I spy
- Musical statues
- Musical chairs
- Bug hunt in garden
- Cycle ride
- Card games
- Reading
- Story writing
- Nature walk
- Sand play
- Snail racing
- Hop scotch
- Skipping with rope
- Braiding/plaiting wool, string or hair
- Tray of gloop (mix of cornflour and water) to play with
- Water play (with jugs and containers) fill, measure, pour
- Bowl of rice or pasta with containers to fill and pour
- Play charades
- Ball games
- Leapfrog
- Blind man's bluff

See or hear

- Home disco
- Silent disco
- Family movie
- Singing
- Dancing
- Pots and pans percussion
- Make your own guitar from a cereal box using elastic bands/string
- Make a percussion shaker using old containers and rice/pasta
- Nursery rhymes with actions
- Simon says
- Make a home video to share with someone who misses you. You could use the ISE (one second every day) – you do a second's worth of video and can add a caption every day
- Photography

Colour or make

- Make a poster explaining how to stay safe from Coronavirus and display at home
- Make a touchy/feely sensory board
- Paper cutting (cutting shapes in paper)
- Paint stones or shells
- Write a letter to a friend, relative or neighbour to cheer them up
- Draw or paint a picture for someone to make them feel special and let them know you are thinking of them
- Planting herbs or flowers
- Grow a cup of cress indoors on wet cotton wool
- Leaf rubbings
- Leaf pictures
- Modelling using natural things found in garden
- Be creative with cardboard boxes and other junk
- Hand painting
- Paint a boiled egg for Easter
- Make an Easter card
- Learn to knit or crochet
- Potatoes painting (use as a print stamp)
- Make a paper windmill
- Origami
- Make a paper kite or plane
- Paint pasta and make necklace/bracelet with it
- Make play dough then play with it (several recipes online)
- Design own board game
- Create own book
- Collect wild flowers and press them in a book
- Use coloured icing to decorate digestive biscuits
- Make your own sandwich or pizza for lunch
- Test sense of smell with blindfold



Use life skills as part of the learning

- Baking cakes
- Gardening
- Housework
- Pretend shops
- Making a den
- Dressing up
- Cooking – making lunch
- Indoor picnics
- Basic sewing skills
- Obstacle courses in the garden e.g. run around the clothes basket, put a peg on the washing line, touch the tree
- Numbers hide and seek – hide numbers around the garden, find them and put them in order
- Help set up home offices task relevant to age e.g. find stationary to help mum and dad work for younger children, set up the workspace – older children
- Hair dressing and face painting
- Clean out animals (hamsters, chickens, rabbits)
- Help put shopping away – what needs to be put away first and why
- Helping decorate e.g. painting, putting wall paper paste on the paper and then watching it be hung on the wall – help hang the paper if older
- Sort out toys and clothes
- Set a daily timetable that the child can own and make decisions about when they need to do things – use a whiteboard or large piece of paper so they can mark their progress off and get a sense of achievement
- Washing gravel (completely unnecessary other than keeping up appearances, but keeps children occupied)
- Weeding block paving

Craft activities

- Flower pressing – from things found in the garden
- Crayon rubbings
- Putting flowers and foliage in a vase
- Making cards to send to loved ones who you can't visit

What did we do today/yesterday

- Draw a picture of what you did
- Write a diary / make a video diary
- Make a time capsule

Communication skills

- Creating a “walky-talky” with two cups and a string and see how much you can hear – write down what the other person said.
- Making a phone call by themselves to friends and relatives – get them to dial the number and leave them to have a conversation

Garden activities

- Treasure hunts (can be inside too)
- Create a mini wormery
- Make a nature reserve in the garden and then monitor how many insects and creatures start to live there (also gets mum and dad out of mowing the lawn and weeding in that area of the garden)
- Plant a mini garden – take plant cuttings and dig up bulb plants from the main garden and put them in a plant pot or old kitchen pot/sauce pan and teach the children how to look after it

Ten inspiring ideas

Write a letter to someone who is self-isolating. Send a picture or letter to your grandparents, or residents in a care home that are unable to see their families at the moment.	“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel” Maya Angelou
Draw or paint a picture of something that makes you happy. You could participate in the rainbow movement (@rainbowtrailuk) where people are encouraged to create a rainbow and place in their window to share with their community.	Rainbows are a universal symbol of hope and promise; they’re the prize for weathering the storm. Time and again rainbows assure us that there will be beauty and clarity following times of doubt.
Use the time to learn a new skill such as touch typing. You can learn for free through a course like typingclub.com	“The expert in anything was once a beginner.” Anon
Create a quiz that your family (across the town, country, or world) can participate in together. Use a tool like ‘Skype’ to be able to connect at the same time and participate together, whilst apart.	Life becomes a celebration when friends keep in touch, so let’s celebrate our life by keeping in touch with one another.
We may need to be at home, but we can still travel virtually. Follow the #museumfromhome where museum professors are telling you fascinating facts about museum artefacts. Or, you can visit any of these sites to get a virtual tour of museums (like The Louvre) or famous places (like The Vatican, or Yellowstone National Park)!	“Keep exploring. Keep dreaming. Keep asking why. Don’t settle for what you already know.” Barack Obama
Learn a new language. You can register for free with Duolingo and they have an introduction to lots of languages, including: Italian, German, Japanese, Arabic or Greek!	“To learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world.” Chinese proverb
Listen to a genre of music you wouldn’t usually listen to, like classical, musicals country, reggae or swing.	“Life seems to go on without effort when I am filled with music.” George Eliot
Have you been outside yet today? Create an A-Z photo collage using items you find outside in your garden. For each letter of the alphabet take a photo of something that begins with the letter.	“Your life is your canvas, create a divine masterpiece.” Anon
Do something kind for someone at home. This is a tough time for everyone – how can you show that you love and appreciate them?	“Love and kindness are never wasted. They always make a difference. They bless the one who receives them, and they bless you, the giver.” Barbara De Angelis
Use a plastic bag and a cup to build a parachute for a toy. How does the size and shape of the parachute affect the time it takes to fall?	“There’s no time to be bored in a world as beautiful as this.” Anon

* courtesy of Coleridge Community College, Cambridge (part of United Learning group of schools)



[BBC CBeebies for special needs](#)

Resources and help for children with additional needs from the BBC, including Mr.Tumble!

Signed Stories

[ITV Signed Stories](#)

Signed Stories help improve the literacy of deaf children from infancy upwards. The website also provides useful advice and guidance for parents, carers and teachers of deaf children, and for the deaf parents of hearing children.



[Makaton with Mencap](#)

Mencap has produced a Makaton video about handwashing.



[Singing Hands UK](#)

Singing Hands is an organisation designed to improve communication with Makaton signing. The YouTube channel has everything from nursery rhymes, stories and games through to pop songs. Singing Hands holds live sessions on YouTube at 10.30am.

Storyline Online

[Storyline Online](#)

Storyline is an award-winning children's literacy website that streams videos featuring celebrated actors reading children's books alongside creatively produced illustrations.



[National Autistic Society](#)

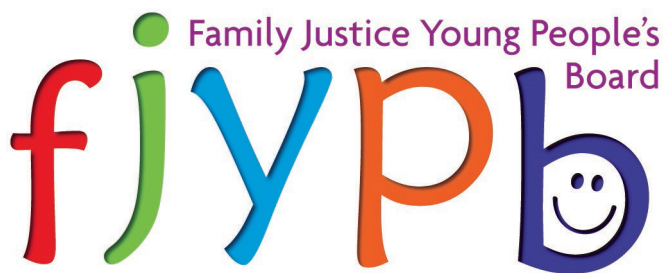
The National Autistic Society is UK's largest provider of specialist autism services. They have published guidance on coronavirus and our handy top tips for dealing with its impact.



How to talk to your child about Covid19:

“Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age.”

World Health Organisation, March 2020



The [Family Justice Young People's Board \(FJYPB\)](#) has published a new [COVID-19 information booklet](#) for children and young people which is packed full of great advice. The booklet includes 'top tips' for keeping in touch with family and friends, how to make the best of being at home, and what to do if feeling unsafe or unwell. FJYPB members also give their thoughts on how COVID-19 is affecting them.

Other resources:

- [Top tips to talking to children about COVID-19](#)
- [Supporting Teenagers and Young Adults During the Coronavirus Crisis](#)
- [Children's Commissioner: Children's guide to coronavirus](#)

Advice from a member of the Family Justice Young People's Board

Plam, Aged 17

I believe at a time like this it's very important to take time away from any news and use the government advice we have been given as a chance to do something you enjoy whether it's doing things such as the below, making sure you stay safe and stay at home where you can.

- Drawing or colouring.
- Family games/board games/Wii/Xbox etc.
- Take time for yourself, something I find very helpful and has gotten me through tough times is music. Music is one of them things that can get you through any situation. Whether you need a uplifting song to help you when you're feeling down, music can help you feel closer to someone whether it is a loved one, family, pets or it can even make you feel closer to yourself.
- Another great thing is mindfulness things, reading is one good thing it helps focus the brain and sometimes getting into a great book is good, it helps block out what's happening around you.
- For people out there who enjoy writing, I believe writing it can be anything, write a song, write a book, write your feelings down, write whatever you feel.
- For the younger children I believe creating and making things is good, find anything in your house and use your imagination to create anything, doesn't have to be big, it doesn't have to be spectacular as long as you're having fun doing it then that's all that matters.
- Lego/k'nex is good or something similar to them.
- For those who are like myself and like doing sports, it's hard to go out and go to the track or football or anything sporty wise, you can do things (providing you have room in your house or garden) in door exercise there is loads of videos on YouTube that are very good.

It's very important to try and stay away from the news as much as possible (but enough to know what's going on). I have heard that a lot of people are obsessing themselves which in its own way is negative. It's good to know what is happening but also you have to take care, not only for your physical health, but for your mental health as well. It's very fragile and your mind does a lot of things that aren't always best for you.



Tips for brothers and sisters at home

Some children and young people will find themselves in the demanding position of being a part-time teacher to a younger brother or sister. Here's some advice on how to make it work:

- It's very normal and understandable for younger brothers and sisters (and you!) to want to be active and run around - especially with these new routines we are all developing - so, even though it feels like it, they are doing this to cope, not exclusively to cause you stress!
- Working at home, especially with parents/brothers/sisters can be really difficult and it is helpful to try to develop a flexible new routine/new expectations e.g. while it's not reasonable to expect your brother or sister never to bounce around at all, could there be agreed times - indicated by the door being closed, or a sign being posted on the door - when you are working and therefore the room is quiet? This can be flexible, but a sign on the door is also helpful because it will be a visual reminder of what you are doing too.
- Having this routine will also help you. You don't need to be working all of the time - so having this routine means that you also have proper down-time.
- It would be really helpful to sit down with your brother or sister and have a quick chat together. If they understand why your work is important to you, and what you have to do, this will help them to understand why you are asking them not to bounce around e.g. "I really like English and I've worked hard on reading x [why this is important to you] and now I need to write a paragraph on xx which will probably take me an hour [specific detail about what is expected]". It may not always feel like it but I am sure that they actually would like to help - but the expectation to 'be quiet' or 'not bounce around' all day, is just too big an ask. If they know why you need them not to bounce around, and how long for, this should help.
- It is impossible to replace any behaviour (such as bouncing around) with nothing - therefore, pleas of 'stop' 'be quiet' 'sit still' are rarely, if ever, effective. What works much better is giving choices e.g. 'Remember, we don't run around - do you want to do X or Y?'
- It sounds simple, but giving choices is a really helpful strategy, which works with all people (adults and children) as it gives us a sense of control. We're not saying it will be easy or that they will take to it straight away, but over time it is a genuinely more helpful approach than 'be quiet'.
- Also, if they have lots of excess energy (which is understandable) then maybe some of those choices could be active but realistic in the home space (e.g. star jumps on the spot).
- It can also be helpful to 'name their need' - that means recognising why he is jumping around e.g. 'I can see that you are bouncing around because you have loads of energy and want to be moving around... but... it is my time to be working remember... so could you use that energy up by jumping on the spot/ kicking a ball in the garden (if you have one)...'
- It's very important for you to remember that, whilst you are keen to help and support, you are not responsible for your brother or sister doing their school work. This is a strange time for everyone and parents/carers up and down the nation are getting used to becoming 'teachers'. It's not easy to follow school routines and expectations at home - so, try not to worry, you don't have to be a teacher too!

* courtesy of Newstead Wood School, Orpington, Kent (part of the United Learning group of schools)

